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TRACTS

ON THE

UNITARIAN CONTROVERSY

PUBLISHED IN 1815.....VIZ.

American Unitarianism.
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Channing's Letter to Thacher.
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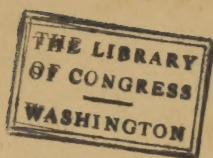
TO WHICH IS ADDED,

THE LAYMAN'S INQUIRY INTO THE RIGHT TO CHANGE THE ECCLESIASTICAL CONSTITUTION OF THE STATE OF MASSACHUSETTS.

BOSTON :

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AMERICAN UNITARIANISM;

OR A

BRIEF HISTORY

OF

THE PROGRESS AND PRESENT STATE OF THE UNITARIAN CHURCHES IN AMERICA."

Compiled, from Documents and Information communicated by
the Rev. JAMES FREEMAN, D. D. and WILLIAM WELLS
Jun. Esq. of Boston, and from other Unitarian
Gentlemen in this Country,

BY REV. THOMAS BELSHAM,
ESSEX-STREET, LONDON.

Extracted from his "Memoirs of the Life of the Reverend THEOPHILUS
LINDSEY," printed in London, 1812, and now published for the
benefit of the Christian Churches in this country,
without note or alteration.

5th

FIFTH EDITION.

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1815.

PREFACE.

WHEN such radical and essential changes take place in the religion of a country, as have been witnessed in some parts of New-England, particularly in Boston and in the region round about it, during the last thirty years, it is gratifying to inquiring minds to know, from correct and undisputed sources and documents, in what manner and by what steps such changes have been effected. The Publishers of this pamphlet are happy that they have it in their power to satisfy the inquisitive on this subject. The information desired will be found in the following pages.

It is proper in this place to admonish the reader, that it is not our object to decide the great question, which has the preference, the *old faith* of the fathers of New-England, which *Unitarians* (to give them their own title) reject as irrational and unscriptural, or that which they have desired, under the idea of a *reform*, to introduce in its place. On this question, every one in this land of freedom of opinion, and of abundant means of information, must judge for himself. To his own Master each must stand or fall. We mean here to offer no opinion of our own ; to introduce nothing of controversy ; but merely to give a plain history of very important *facts*, derived from *unquestionable* sources, disclosing the instruments and operations by which these great and visible changes in the religious faith of so many of our Clergy, of the Churches, and of the University in this part of New-

England, have been accomplished. This publication seems now to be required, and even necessary; because those who have been chiefly concerned in conducting these operations, have deemed it expedient, *till this stage of their process*, to conceal from the mass of the Christian community their *ultimate* designs. The history, therefore, which we now lay before the public, in its most material parts, will be new to most of its readers, and, as we believe, interesting to all. Though this history is now before the public, we are not quite certain that *all* the advocates of the changes in the religion of our country which it relates, are agreed as to the expediency and seasonableness of the present disclosure, or are disposed to commend Mr. Belsham for making it, in the manner he has done, on the other side of the Atlantic. The care which has been manifested to limit the knowledge of this interesting work, during many months, (probably two years) since its arrival in Boston, indicates pretty plainly the unwillingness of those who have possessed copies of it, to have its contents generally known. On this subject, however, we would not be positive. Appearances may have deceived us. The gentlemen who received this work from its Author, may have had other and very satisfactory reasons for this *apparent* concealment of it for so long a period. If so, we may, and we hope we shall, receive their thanks, and the thanks also of other American Unitarians, for bringing before the public *their own history*, in so unexceptionable a form, from the pen of a man, considered deservedly as standing at the head of their denomination, who derived his facts and information confessedly from gentlemen in this country, who were best acquainted with

the subject ; who have been principals in the history which they narrate ; and who, moreover, wrote evidently not for the public eye, but only for the information of private, confidential friends, and of course what they conceived to be naked and undisguised truth. Rarely indeed has the Christian public been favoured with a portion of history, which has had as high claims to attention and credit, for the reasons above stated, as that which is contained in the following pages. We may, therefore, without presumption, anticipate the pleasure we shall afford to all denominations of Christians, by giving them, in a cheap form, this very interesting portion of ecclesiastical history.

We have another reason for making this publication. Many complaints have been made that the Boston Clergy have been “slanderosly reported” to be *Unitarians*. This pamphlet will shew who are their “slanderers,” if indeed they are entitled to this character, and exculpate some who have been falsely accused in this thing.*

To evince the impartiality of Mr. Belsham, as respects the body of Christians in this country, whose history he has written, and to shew that his testimony concerning them is entitled to full confidence, his religious *creed*, (for *English* Unitarians have *creeds*, and long ones too, though their American brethren profess to have none) and from his own pen, is subjoined, and is as follows :—

“I shall now proceed to exhibit a concise view of Rational Christianity in its connexion with Natural Religion.

“Of Rational Religion, the first and fundamental principle is, that the Maker of the universe is infinitely powerful, wise,

* See pages 33, 41, and 44, of this pamphlet.

and good, and that it is impossible for him to act in contradiction to his essential attributes.

“GOD IS LOVE. Infinite benevolence *alone* prompted him to action. And infinite benevolence, combined with unerring wisdom, and supported by irresistible power, will infallibly accomplish its purpose in the best possible manner. It appears in fact, that a limited quantity of evil, both natural and moral, was necessary to the production of the greatest possible good. Whence this necessity arises, we know not; but that it could not be avoided in a system upon the whole the best, we are well assured; for God would not choose evil for its own sake. Evil therefore is introduced and permitted, not because it is *approved*, but because it is *unavoidable*. It is in its own nature temporary and self-destructive; and in the view of the Deity it is absorbed and lost in the contemplation of its ultimate beneficial effects, so that to him the whole system appears wise, beautiful and good.

“God is the Former, the Father, and Benefactor of the human race, whom for wise reasons, unknown to us, but perfectly consistent, no doubt, with his magnificent plan of universal order and happiness, he has been pleased to place in circumstances of frailty and danger, the natural consequence of which, in their progress through life, is the contraction of a certain degree of moral pollution, which, in the nature of things, and by the divine appointment, exposes them to a proportionate degree of misery here or hereafter.

“But this fact by no means proves a preponderance of vice and misery in the world; otherwise we must conclude that the Maker of the world, whose character we learn only from his works, is a weak or a malignant being. The truth is, that although the quantity of vice and misery actually existing is very considerable, there is nevertheless, upon the whole, a very great preponderance of good in general, and, with few, if any exceptions, in every individual in particular.

“The almost universal desire of life and dread of dissolution, amounts to a strong presumption, that life is in general a blessing. And the disgrace universally attached to flagrant vice, proves that such vice is not common. Character is the sum total of moral and intellectual habits, and the proportion of vir-

tuous habits, in the worst characters, exceeds that of vicious ones. But no character takes the denomination of virtuous unless *all* the habits are on the side of virtue: whereas *one* evil habit is sufficient to stamp a character vicious.

“God cannot be unjust to any of his creatures. Having brought men into existence and placed them in circumstances of imminent peril, though in the nature of things misery is necessarily connected with vice, we may certainly conclude that none of the creatures of God in *such*, or in *any* circumstances, will ever be made *eternally miserable*. Indeed it is plainly repugnant to the justice of God, that the existence to any of his intelligent creatures, should be upon the whole a curse.

“The light of philosophy affords a few plausible arguments for the doctrine of a future life: there are some appearances physical and moral, which cannot be satisfactorily explained upon any other supposition. But since the sentient powers are suspended by death, and admit of no revival but by the revival of the man, a fact the expectation of which is entirely unsupported both by experience and analogy, the speculations of philosophy would commonly, and almost necessarily, terminate in the disbelief of a future existence.

“Here divine revelation offers its seasonable and welcome aid. God has commissioned his faithful and holy servant, Jesus of Nazareth, to teach the universal resurrection of the dead, and by his own resurrection to confirm and exemplify his doctrine.

“Jesus hath authoritatively taught, that the wicked will be raised to suffering; nor could it possibly be otherwise, if they are to be raised with the same system of habits and feelings with which they descended to the grave, and without which their identity would be lost. But since eternal misery for temporary crimes is inconsistent with every principle of justice, and since a resurrection from previous insensibility to indefinite misery, to be succeeded by absolute annihilation, is a harsh supposition, contrary to all analogy, and not to be admitted but upon the clearest evidence, we are naturally led to conclude, that the sufferings of the wicked will be remedial, and that they will terminate in a complete purification from moral disorder, and in their ultimate restoration to virtue and happiness. In

this conclusion we seem to be justified by those passages in the apostolical writings which declare, that the blessings of the gospel shall be far more extensive than the calamities of the fall, and that Christ shall reign till all things shall be subdued unto him. (Rom. v.—1 Cor. xv.)

“The apostles were commanded to preach the gospel to the idolatrous heathen as well as to the chosen family of Abraham, and they were authorized to confirm their doctrine by miracles. These extraordinary powers are in the Scriptures called the Spirit of God, and the Holy Spirit; and the great change which took place in the views, feelings, and character of pharisaic Jews and idolatrous heathen, when they sincerely professed the Christian faith, is called, *a new creation, regeneration, rising from the dead*, and the like. And as conversion to Christianity was usually produced by the evidence of miracles, this new creation, regeneration, sanctification, or passing from death to life, is in this sense ascribed to the Spirit of God.

“The Jews, having been chosen by God to peculiar privileges, entertained a very high notion of their own dignity, and expressed themselves in the most contemptuous language of the idolatrous gentiles, who were not in covenant with Jehovah. Of themselves they spoke as *a chosen and a holy nation, sons of God, and heirs of the promises*. But the heathens were represented as *sinners, as aliens, as enemies to God*, and the like. In allusion to which forms of expression, the converted gentiles being entitled equally with converted Jews, to the blessings of the new dispensation, they are therefore said to be *forgiven, reconciled, and saved*, to be *fellow-citizens* with the saints, and of the household of God.

“The death of Jesus is sometimes called a *propitiation*, because it put an end to the Mosaic economy, and introduced a new and more liberal dispensation, under which the gentiles, who were before regarded as enemies, are admitted into a state of amity and reconciliation; that is, into a state of privilege similar to that of the Jews. It is also occasionally called a *sacrifice*, being the ratification of that new covenant into which God is pleased to enter with his human offspring, by which a resurrection to immortal life and happiness is promised, without distinction, to all who are truly virtuous. Believers in Christ

are also said to have *redemption through his blood*, because they are released by the Christian covenant from the yoke of the ceremonial law, and from the bondage of idolatry. Dr. Taylor has in general well explained these Jewish phrases in his admirable *Key* to the apostolic writings, prefixed to his Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans.

“The Scriptures contain a faithful and credible account of the *Christian doctrine*, which is the *true word of God*: but they are not *themselves* the word of God, nor do they ever assume that title: and it is highly improper to speak of them as such, as it leads inattentive readers to suppose they were written under a plenary inspiration, to which they make no pretension, and as such expressions expose Christianity unnecessarily to the cavils of unbelievers.

“Christianity sums up the whole of human duty in the love of God and our neighbour; and requiring that *all* our time should be employed to the best account, and that every action should be consecrated to God, lays no stress upon ritual observations, and expressly abolishes that distinction of days, which formed so conspicuous a feature in the Mosaic institute. To a true Christian every day is a Sabbath, every place is a temple, and every action of life an act of devotion. A Christian is not required to be more holy, nor permitted to take greater liberties upon one day than upon another. Whatever is lawful or expedient upon one day of the week is, under the Christian dispensation, equally lawful and expedient on any other day. Public worship, however, must be conducted at stated intervals; and it has been usual from the earliest times for Christians to assemble together, on the first day of the week, to commemorate the death and to celebrate the resurrection of their Master.

“This appears to me to be the true doctrine of reason and revelation, in which the God of nature is not represented as frowning over his works, and like a merciless tyrant dooming his helpless creatures to eternal misery, with the arbitrary exception of a chosen few; but as the wise, benevolent, and impartial parent of his rational offspring, who is training them all, under various processes of intellectual and moral discipline, to perfect virtue and everlasting felicity. Such is the God of my faith and adoration, the God of nature and of revelation, the

God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, that God whose existence, attributes, and government are the joy and confidence of every enlightened and virtuous believer.”*

“Jesus is indeed now alive. But as we are totally ignorant of the place where he resides, and of the occupations in which he is engaged, there can be no proper foundation for religious addresses to him, nor of *gratitude* for favors now received, nor yet of confidence in his future interposition in our behalf.”†

MR. LINDSEY’S CREED.

“There is ONE GOD, one single person who is God, the sole Creator and Sovereign Lord of all things.

“The holy Jesus was a man of the Jewish nation, the servant of this God, highly honoured and distinguished by him.

“The Spirit, or Holy Spirit, was not a person or intelligent being, but only the extraordinary power or gift of God, first to our Lord Jesus Christ himself in his life time, and afterwards to the Apostles and many of the first Christians, to empower them to preach and propagate the Gospel with success.”‡

The above Creeds are strictly *Unitarian*; or more properly what divines in this country would denominate *Socinian*. They do not embrace the *Arian* idea of the pre-existence of Christ’s human soul, or that he originally possessed a super-angelic nature; or that his sufferings and death were in any sense to be considered as *propitiatory*, or that divine honours were due to him. The *English Unitarians* reject these opinions as absurd, and maintain the *simple humanity* of Jesus. § Of this character is the *Unitarianism*, the history of whose progress in this country is given in the following pages.

April 3d, 1815.

* See Belsham’s Review of Wilberforce’s Treatise, Letter II.

† See Letter VIII. in the forementioned work.

‡ See Memoirs of Lindsey, p. 212.

§ See Dr. Lardner’s opinion on this subject, as quoted by Mr. Belsham (Life of Lindsey) p. 219—220, note.

AMERICAN UNITARIANISM, &c.

Unitarian Liturgy adopted by the Congregation at the King's Chapel at Boston, in New-England. Mr. Lindsey corresponds with Dr. Freeman, Mr. Vanderkemp, &c. Progress and present state of the Unitarian Churches in America.

THE grand theological controversies which excited so much attention, and were conducted with so much animosity, in England, could not fail to attract notice in America, and especially in the New-England States, where a manliness of character, a decency of morals, and a serious though not universally enlightened spirit of piety, dispose the minds of considerable numbers to religious enquiries, and where freedom of investigation suffers no restraint from the civil power. It was with great pleasure that Mr. Lindsey received information in the year 1786, from a respectable correspondent, (the Rev. I. Smith, afterwards Librarian to the University of Cambridge, in N. England,) that the principal Episcopalian Church in Boston had consented to the introduction of a Liturgy reformed nearly upon the plan of that which had been adopted in Essex-Street and perfectly Unitarian.* The Minister of this congregation, which

* In Mr. Freeman's first letter to Mr. Lindsey, dated July 7, 1786, he tells his venerable correspondent, "The Liturgy of our church was during a long time unpopular. But your approbation, the note of Dr. Price annexed to a letter of Dr. Lush, and the mention which Dr. Priestley is pleased to make of it in his sermon upon the fifth of November, have raised it in esteem. It now seems to be acknowledged that that book cannot be very absurd which is praised by men of such great learning and abilities, and who have been so long known and so justly admired in this country. I wish the work was more worthy of your approbation. I can only say that I endeavoured to make it so by attempting to introduce your Liturgy entire. But the people of the Chapel were not ripe for so great a change. Some

assembled at what was called the King's Chapel, was the Rev. James Freeman, and is described by his friend as "a young man of a great deal of knowledge and good sense, and of an excellent disposition." Some of his hearers left him on account of the change introduced into the service; but the majority adhered to him, and the congregation flourished under him. He was for some time under considerable embarrass-

defects and improprieties I was under the necessity of retaining, for the sake of inducing them to omit the most exceptionable parts of the old service, the Athanasian prayers. Perhaps in some future day, when their minds become more enlightened, they may consent to a further alteration."

The writer of this memoir is happy to add, that the day of increased light and liberality, predicted by this enlightened reformer, is now arrived, and that Dr. Freeman has himself lived to see his own prediction verified. In a new edition of the Boston Liturgy, printed in the year 1811, a copy of which the writer has had the honour to receive as a present from the Ministers, Wardens, and Vestry of the King's Chapel, nothing is to be found which is inconsistent with the purest principles of Unitarian worship as such, and with a very few alterations, chiefly verbal, it might be made perfectly unobjectionable. May it long be the efficacious means of supporting the purity and simplicity of Christian worship, and diffusing a spirit of rational piety!

Mr. Freeman further proceeds to state the progress which Unitarian principles were making in the United States, and particularly in New-England. This he imputes to the many excellent books published in England, and to Mr. Lindsey's Works in particular, which were much read and with great effect. The sermons and conversation of some Clergymen in New-England also contributed their share: and amongst these he mentions the Rev. Mr. Hazlitt, a pious, zealous and intelligent English minister, who since his return to England is settled at Wem in Shropshire. Mr. Freeman speaks of himself as particularly indebted to the instructions and conversation of this respectable person. "I bless the day," says he, "when that honest man first landed in this country." In another letter dated June, 1789, Mr. Freeman writes, "Before Mr. Hazlitt came to Boston, the Trinitarian doxology was almost universally used. That honest, good man prevailed upon several respectable ministers to omit it. Since his departure, the number of those who repeat only scriptural doxologies has greatly increased, so that there are now many churches in which the worship is strictly Unitarian.

ment for want of episcopal ordination, upon which some of his hearers laid much stress, though in the estimation of the more judicious members of his congregation, as well as of Mr. Freeman himself, it was rather a matter of expedience than necessity. To avoid, however, giving unnecessary offence, he applied for orders first to Bishop Seabury, who had lately been consecrated by the non-juring bishops of Scotland, and who exercised his jurisdiction over the episcopal churches in Connecticut. But this prelate, being a rigid Calvinist, would not lay hands upon his suspected brother. Application was then made to Dr. Provost, who had been elected bishop of the province of New-York, and who together with Dr. White had been consecrated to the episcopal office by the prelates of the church of England. This gentleman, who had been a pupil to Dr. Jebb, was a man of great learning, of liberal sentiments, and of deep piety. At the Convention of the episcopal clergy at Philadelphia, he had himself proposed a very important alteration in the Litany, viz. to leave out the invocations to the Son, the Holy Ghost, and the Trinity; and to retain only the first, which is addressed "to God the Father Almighty, the Maker of heaven and earth." To this worthy prelate, therefore, the members of the congregation at the King's Chapel repeatedly applied to obtain episcopal ordination for their respected minister. But the bishop, perhaps unwilling to give offence to his weaker brethren, referred the matter to the next Convention at Philadelphia; which determined Mr. Freeman's friends, who had reason to apprehend, that whatever might be the information and liberality of some individuals, the majority would decide against him, to ordain their own pastor at home. This solemn rite, therefore, was performed, with the previous approbation of many persons of high character and worth who had been consulted upon the occasion, on Sunday the 18th of November, 1787, according to a form suggested by Governor Bowdoin, a gentleman, whose learning,

good sense, and merit, as Mr. Freeman expresses it in his letter to Mr. Lindsey, "would give a sanction to any sentiment which he espouses," though the honourable Governor was not a member of the King's Chapel congregation. "The whole ceremony," says Mr. Freeman, "was performed with great decency and solemnity in the presence of a very numerous assembly. Deep attention was impressed upon every countenance, and many of the advocates for religious liberty, of our own and other churches, could not forbear expressing their sensibility by tears of joy." The form used upon this interesting occasion is published by Mr. Lindsey in *Vindiciæ Priestleianæ*, who there expresses his entire approbation of it. All difficulties were at length surmounted: the remaining scruples of those who were advocates for episcopal ordination gradually subsided,* and the cause of the

* In tenderness to the prejudices of some worthy members of the congregation, a vote was passed by the Society, that Mr. Freeman's ordination should be confirmed by an episcopal imposition of hands, if it could be at any future time conveniently procured without sacrificing their own religious sentiments. But a circumstance occurred shortly afterwards, which contributed more effectually to overrule the scruples of those who were unsatisfied, than any thing which Mr. Freeman or his friends could say or write upon the subject. This was the ordination of a clergyman at Boston by Bishop Seabury.

"If any prejudices remained upon the minds of my people in favour of episcopal ordination," says Mr. Freeman in a letter to Mr. Lindsey, dated October 15, 1788, "what you say in your book, the *Vindiciæ Priestleianæ*, would effectually remove them. But they are already cured of all prepossessions of that nature. I mentioned in a former letter, that Bishop Seabury had ordained a priest in Boston. The members of my congregation in general attended. They were so shocked with the service, particularly with that part where the bishop pretends to communicate the Holy Ghost and the power of forgiving sins, which he accompanied with the action of breathing on the candidate, that they now congratulate me upon having escaped what they consider as little short of blasphemy. Few of them had ever read, or at least attentively considered, the Ordination service. Since they have heard it, I have frequently been seriously asked by them, whether I would have submitted to so absurd a form.

congregation continued to flourish under the auspices of this pious and exemplary preacher for upwards of twenty years. Since January, 1809, Mr. now Dr. Freeman has been associated with a colleague, the Rev. Samuel Cary, who, if we may judge by the specimen of his talents and spirit in the sermon which he delivered on the day of his ordination, and by the esteem and affection expressed in the charge of his revered associate, is worthy of the honourable situation which he occupies, and is well qualified to carry on the cause in which his excellent colleague has been so long and so successfully engaged. May this holy cause continue to prosper in their hands, and when the chief Shepherd shall appear, may they receive a crown of glory !

As a further means of diffusing the important doctrines of the proper Unity of God, and the simple humanity of Jesus Christ, Mr. Lindsey made a present of his own and of Dr. Priestley's Theological Works to the Library of Harvard College, in the Uni-

I confess that I am convinced I should have acted wrong if I had done it. I shudder when I reflect to what moral danger I exposed myself in soliciting ordination of the American bishops, for I certainly never believed that they had the power of conveying the Holy Spirit."

Bishop Seabury might be, and probably was a very honest man. How far his wisdom kept pace with his honesty, the following anecdote may assist the reader to judge. This venerable prelate, after having been invested, or imagined himself invested, with extraordinary powers by the manual imposition of a few obscure and ignorant priests in Scotland, when he had returned to Connecticut, wrote to Dr. Stiles, the president of the College, the learned friend and correspondent of Dr. Price, that it was his intention to be at the annual meeting of the institution, but that he "hoped he should be received with proper distinction, and that his precedency would be allowed in the place allotted to him." To which the learned president sent back a courteous answer: "That they should be very glad to see Bishop Seabury, but that he could not promise him any such mark of distinction as he expected. One thing however he could engage for, and would assure him of, that he would meet with a hundred and ninety-one as good Bishops as himself."

versity of Cambridge in New-England; for which, "as a very valuable and acceptable present," he received the thanks of the President and Fellows. These books were read with great avidity by the students. But though there is great reason to believe that the seed thus sown took deep root, and that in many instances it produced an abundant harvest; and though many persons eminent for rank and talent in the New-England States* openly avowed the Unitarian creed, it does not appear that any numerous societies of Christians have hitherto followed the example of the congregation at the King's Chapel in making a public profession of the Unitarian doctrine.

In March, 1792, an Unitarian congregation was formed at Portland, a considerable town of the district of Maine, in the north-eastern part of the State of Massachusetts. The worthy founder of this society was the Reverend Thomas Oxnard, a man of good talents, of sincere piety and of ardent zeal, who had for some years officiated as minister of the episcopalian church at Portland, and who had been convinced of the truth of the Unitarian doctrine by reading the works of Dr. Priestley and Mr. Lindsey, with which he had been supplied by his friend Mr. Freeman. Through the same means, and by the public and private instructions of this good man, in the course of a few years, many other persons of property and respect-

* "Gov. Bowdoin," says Mr. Lindsey's worthy correspondent, "is a critic in biblical learning. Gen. Knox, one of the most distinguished officers in the late war, is an admirer of such authors as Edward Search. General Lincoln, our present worthy Lieutenant-Governor, appears uniformly and openly the friend of those doctrines that you approve. There are many others besides, in our Legislature, of similar sentiments. While so many of our great men are thus on the side of truth and free inquiry, they will necessarily influence many of the common people. As we have no establishment to oppose, the same zeal which is felt in England cannot be expected in this country; but Rational Christianity will, I doubt not, make a rapid though not very visible progress. This letter was written in 1788.

ability of character embraced and avowed the same principles. "I cannot," says this worthy man in a letter dated November, 1788, "express to you the avidity with which these Unitarian publications are sought after. Our friends here are clearly convinced that the Unitarian doctrine will soon become the prevailing opinion in this country; which must afford great pleasure to those good men, Mr. Lindsey and Dr. Priestley. Three years ago, I did not know a single Unitarian in this part of the country besides myself: and now, entirely from the various publications you have furnished, a decent society might be collected from this and the neighbouring towns. When you again write to Mr. Lindsey, you may assure him in the most positive terms that his and Dr. Priestley's publications have had, and probably will have, great effects in this part of the country; which I am sure must afford him great satisfaction."

Agreeably to this account, the doctrine of the proper Unity of God made a progress so rapid in the town and vicinage of Portland, that in the beginning of the year 1792 an effort was made to introduce a reformed Liturgy into the episcopal church; which being resisted by one or two leading members of the congregation, the Unitarians, who constituted a considerable majority of the society, seceded from the rest; and forming themselves into a separate church, they chose the Reverend Mr. Oxnard to be their minister; and being denied the use of the episcopal chapel, they assembled for religious worship at one of the public school-houses, which was large and commodious, and where they carried on the worship of the One God with increasing popularity and success.

About the same time another society for Unitarian worship was formed at Saco, a populous village about twenty miles distant from Portland, under the auspices of Mr. Thatcher, a gentleman of large property and of excellent character, who was repeatedly returned as representative in Congress for the northern district in the State of Massachusetts. Mr. Thatcher

was originally an unbeliever; but possessing a candid and inquisitive mind, he became a very sincere and rational Christian, in consequence of reading Dr. Priestley's Works; and, as Mr. Lindsey's correspondent expresses it, "the influence of our divine religion became very evident in his life and manners." This gentleman, by his conversation, his occasional publications, by lending Unitarian books, and by the great influence of his moral and religious character, contributed much to diffuse rational and pure Christianity in the vicinity of his residence, and formed at Saco a congregation of Unitarian Christians, which was for some time connected with that at Portland, but afterwards became sufficiently numerous and respectable to maintain a separate minister. In England the spirit of the times is more liberal than the spirit of the laws. In America it is the reverse; and the bigotry of individuals sometimes labours to counteract the unlimited freedom of faith and worship, which is the glory of the Constitution of the United States. The active zeal of Mr. Thatcher, in promoting the worship of One God in opposition to unscriptural formularies and creeds, excited the malignant efforts of some of his bigoted neighbours to oppose his re-election to a seat in Congress. But the high character, the approved patriotism, and the distinguished talents of that honourable gentleman secured him an easy triumph over the mean attacks of ignorance and envy, and he was again returned by a great majority.

Upon the formation of the first Unitarian Society in the district of Maine, Mr. Lindsey's intelligent correspondent makes the following just and important observations, in a letter dated May 24, 1792.

"I consider the establishment of this society as an event peculiarly favourable to the progress of Unitarianism in this country. The eastern division of this State, commonly called the province of Maine, of which Portland is the capital, is one of the most flourishing parts of the United States. It is rapidly

Increasing in population and in wealth. Portland, which under the name of Falmouth was almost totally destroyed during the last war, has now become a large and respectable town, and bids fair in the course of half a century to rival Boston. Like other capital towns, it will probably influence the opinions of the surrounding country. It may be expected, therefore, that Unitarianism will grow with its growth, and be widely diffused. What favours this expectation is, that one of the ministers of the town, a very liberal and enlightened man, is upon very good terms with the Unitarian Society, and not disposed to discountenance them. In sentiment, he professes to be a Sabellian. The other ministers in the neighbourhood are in general ignorant and some of them vicious. The consequence is, that there is less appearance of religion in the province of Maine than in any other part of New-England. I have no doubt, therefore, that a number of Unitarians, possessing that purity of morals for which they are generally distinguished, will have a great effect, not only in diffusing rational sentiments, but also in reforming the practice of their fellow-citizens. I give this not merely as my own opinion, but as the opinion of some gentlemen who are best informed in the State of the province of Maine. The establishment of a rational Christian society, and the happy changes which are to be expected in future, must, Sir, in a great measure be ascribed to the books which you have sent over. What, therefore, must be your triumph, when you reflect that you have enlightened the minds of your fellow Christians, and that you will probably be the means of turning many to righteousness !”

How far this worthy and ardent correspondent of Mr. Lindsey was warranted in the sanguine expectations he expresses of the success and beneficial effects of the Unitarian doctrine in the New-England States, does not very distinctly appear. In 1788 he states to his venerable friend, that the Socinian scheme is less frightful than it was some years ago, and begins to

have some public advocates. The only minister, however, who then preached in favour of it was Mr. Bentley, of Salem, a fellow-collegian and intimate friend of the writer, who describes him as "a young man of a bold independent mind, of strong natural powers, and of more skill in the learned languages than any person of his years in the State." This gentleman had the good fortune to be connected with a congregation uncommonly liberal, who were not alarmed at any improvements, and who were pleased with the introduction of Bishop Lowth's translation of Isaiah, and of other improved translations of the prophetic Scriptures, in preference to the common English version, which was a liberty that few of the ministers in New-England would be allowed to take. In 1793, Unitarianism remained at Portland in the state in which it had been settled the preceding year: but the Clergy in the neighbourhood of Saco having passed a censure upon these opinions as unsound and heretical, the consequence of this attack was an able defence of the doctrine by its advocates in that vicinage, and a subscription for building an Unitarian church. In the year 1794, the same respectable correspondent communicates to his venerable friend the progress which the doctrine and worship of the One true God, the Father, were making in the southern districts of the State of Massachusetts. "The counties of Plymouth, Barnstable and Bristol, were the first part of New-England settled by the English; and till the year 1692, when they were annexed to Massachusetts, constituted a distinct province. The first settlers were a religious and industrious people, of more candid minds and less disposed to persecution than the settlers of Massachusetts. Though the country is barren, yet it has become one of the most populous districts of the United States. The inhabitants are enlightened and virtuous. Crimes are unknown; and there has not been a capital execution for upwards of sixty years. Such characters are valuable acquisitions to the cause of truth. It must give you plea-

sure, therefore, to learn that two ministers, one in the county of Plymouth, and the other in the county of Barnstable, have lately come forward and openly opposed the doctrine of the Trinity. Their preaching has made a deep impression, and converts have been multiplied. In Barnstable county in particular, there is a very large body of Unitarians."

This letter was written not long after the worthy writer had received intelligence of Mr. Lindsey's resignation of the pastoral office, on account, not of declining health, but of advanced age; and I cannot deny myself the gratification of transcribing Dr. Freeman's excellent and judicious reflections upon that occasion. "I fervently pray, dear sir, that your health may long be preserved, and that your old age may be as happy as the meridian of your life has been active and useful. You now enjoy the fruits of your labours. You have reclaimed many from the errors of idolatry and superstition. You have diffused knowledge and truth not only in England but America. But what is most to your honour, though you have displayed all the zeal of a reformer, yet you have possessed none of that bitterness of spirit with which reformers are too often infected. In your numerous works I find no harsh expressions or malignant censures. I contemplate this part of your character with peculiar pleasure; and though I am conscious I am frequently more angry with error and bigotry than a Christian ought to be, yet I ardently desire to imitate your candour and mildness of temper. Excuse this praise; it is suggested to me by your two last excellent discourses." This is a high and at the same time a discriminating and justly merited eulogy, and must no doubt have been gratifying to the venerable person to whom it was addressed; whose great humility would, however, lead him to disclaim in part, at least, his title to it.

In a letter dated May 24th, 1796, the amiable and candid writer expresses some little doubt, whether his zeal may not have induced him inadvertently to ex-

aggerate the success of Unitarian principles in the United States ; and he endeavours to give a correct account of the actual state of the public mind upon this subject. As this is the last of Dr. Freeman's letters upon the state of Unitarianism in America, which is in my possession, and as it contains a more general view of the case than he had before exhibited, I shall make no apology for the length of the extract :

“ I consider it,” says this intelligent correspondent to his venerated friend, “ as one of the most happy effects which have resulted from my feeble exertions in the Unitarian cause, that they have introduced me to the knowledge and friendship of some of the most valuable characters of the present age ; men of enlightened heads, of pious and benevolent hearts ; *quibuscum vivere amem, quibuscum obire libens.*

“ Though it is a standing article of most of our social libraries, that nothing of a controversial nature should be purchased, yet any book which is presented is freely accepted. I have found means, therefore, of introducing into them some of the Unitarian Tracts with which you have kindly furnished me. There are few persons who have not read them with avidity ; and when read, they cannot fail to make an impression upon the minds of many. From these and other causes, the Unitarian doctrine appears to be still upon the increase. I am acquainted with a number of ministers, particularly in the southern part of this state, who avow and publicly preach this sentiment. There are others more cautious, who content themselves with leading their hearers, by a course of rational but prudent sermons, gradually and insensibly to embrace it. Though this latter mode is not what I entirely approve, yet it produces good effects. For the people are thus kept out of the reach of false opinions, and are prepared for the impressions which will be made on them by more bold and ardent successors, who will probably be raised up when these timid characters are removed off the stage. In the eastern part of this State, or what is called the District of

Maine, the Unitarian doctrine also makes progress, as I have just been informed by a worthy and judicious minister from that quarter. The Clergy are generally the first who begin to speculate : but the people soon follow, where they are so much accustomed to read and enquire.

“ In the accounts which I give you of the state of religious opinions in this country, I always endeavour not to exaggerate, sensible that every zealous man (and I confess that I am zealous) is naturally disposed to rate his own party as highly as he can. It is possible that Unitarianism may be losing ground in one quarter while it is gaining it in another, and that I may not perceive or may not attend to the former. Indeed, I confess and lament that the opinion is scarcely known in the largest part of this vast Republic. It flourishes chiefly in New-England ; but not much in Connecticut, Rhode-Island, New-Hampshire, and the western counties of Massachusetts. A few seeds have been sown in Vermont, and an abundant harvest has been produced in the vicinity of Boston and the counties directly south of it. In Pennsylvania, much may be expected from the labours of Dr. Priestley.”—It is now upwards of fifteen years since this letter was written ; and though it cannot reasonably be doubted that the important doctrines of the unrivalled supremacy and sole worship of the Father, and of the proper humanity of Jesus Christ, have during that period been gradually advancing in a country so favourable to freedom of enquiry ; yet it may justly be questioned whether the progress of truth has been quite so rapid, visible, or extensive, as the zeal of this ingenuous and ardent lover of truth prompted him to expect. Dr. Priestley’s personal ministry in the United States was attended with very little apparent success. In Northumberland, where he resided, he collected but few proselytes ; and in Philadelphia, where the chapel in which he preached was at first crowded with the principal characters in the United States, he was afterwards for some reason

or other almost deserted. Yet here his labours were not wholly ineffectual. Since Dr. Priestley's decease a small, but highly respectable congregation, has been formed, in which, till a regular minister can be procured, a few of the most intelligent and best informed members conduct the service by turns ; and the society, upon the whole, is increasing, though some who once professed zeal in the cause have turned their backs upon it. The Unitarians in Philadelphia are now erecting a chapel for religious worship, to which many of different persuasions have contributed liberally.

Another Unitarian congregation has been formed at Oldenbarneveld, a new settlement in the back country of the state of New-York, under the patronage of Col. Mappa, a gentleman of a truly respectable character, and of considerable property and influence in that district, aided by the exertions of the Rev. Frederick Adrian Vanderkemp, a learned and pious emigrant from Holland, whose zeal for the doctrine of the Divine Unity has exposed him to many difficulties and privations. This church was, for a few years, under the pastoral inspection of the Rev. John Sherman, who in the year 1805 was dismissed, on account of his Unitarian principles, from his office as minister of the first church at Mansfield in Connecticut, where he had officiated upwards of eight years with great and increasing acceptance and success. Of the circumstances which led to this separation, and of the inquisitorial spirit which was exerted against him by the bigoted clergy in his neighbourhood, he published a plain and affecting account, a copy of which now lies before me. And if some expressions of irritation have escaped him, which it would perhaps have been better to omit, it requires but little charity to make allowance for them where the provocation was so great and unmerited.

This gentleman, in consequence of an attentive perusal of the works of Mr. Lindsey and Dr. Priestley, became a sincere and zealous convert to the doctrine

of the proper Unity and Sole Supremacy of God, to the simple humanity of Jesus Christ, and to the appropriation of religious worship to the Father only. A doctrine of such high importance, and so materially differing from the popular creed, he justly conceived it to be his duty to avow and teach.* And in the first

* This worthy confessor's plain and artless narrative of the feelings of his mind upon this occasion, is well deserving of being here transcribed, and may it make a due impression upon all who are placed in similar circumstances, and called out to similar trials!

"Settled," says he, "in the sentiment that God is one person only, and that Jesus Christ is a being distinct from God, dependent upon him for his existence and all his powers, I was involved in much trial and perplexity of mind with respect to the course which duty required me to pursue. I was aware of the prejudices of my brethren in the ministry, and foresaw that, should my sentiments be made public, they would certainly exert themselves to destroy my ministerial and Christian standing; that my standing with the people of my charge, whose confidence I was so happy as to possess, would be endangered, if not by their own prejudices, yet by the influence and exertions of others; and considering the state of the American churches, that I could hardly expect an invitation to minister to any people on this side of the Atlantic. Poverty, a diminution of my usefulness, and the unhappy condition of my beloved family, stared me in the face, and conjured me to be silent respecting my opinions.

"On the other hand, I considered that, having avowed different sentiments at my ordination, it could not be reconciled to a frank and open honesty to allow the world to be deceived as to my real belief;—that it is the duty of the minister of the Gospel to instruct men in the knowledge of its important doctrines;—that I was accountable to God for my conduct in this matter, who requires of stewards that a man be found faithful, and who certainly must desire his people to be acquainted with the truth, or he would never have revealed it;—that no reformation from prevailing errors could take place, if those who are acquainted with the truth should, through the fear of persecution, conceal it from public view;—and finally, that it is base and unbecoming the dignity of man, in this nineteenth century of the Christian æra, in this land of liberty and free inquiry, to bow down to popular absurdities and superstitions, and quietly to abandon the unalienable right of private judgment. These considerations determined me to put all temporal things at hazard, and to place my trust in that wise Providence which

place he communicated his change of sentiments to the congregation with which he was connected; when, to his great surprize and satisfaction, he found that, with a single exception, they were all earnestly desirous that he should continue his connection with them, and that each should quietly allow to others the right of private judgment in this and every other case. This however did not satisfy his clerical brethren, with whom, as residing in the neighbourhood, he had joined in a voluntary association. Being duly informed by Deacon Southworth, the dissatisfied member before alluded to, of his reverend pastor's departure from the faith, they first in a formal session, held in October, 1804, excluded him from their society, and disavowed ministerial connection with him. And in this measure was no injustice; for the associated ministers had as good a right to judge of the truth and importance of their opinions, as Mr. Sherman of his. But the zeal of these pious inquisitors did not stop here: they wrote an official letter to the church at Mansfield, stating, that they had judged it to be their duty to withdraw from their heretical brother their own ministerial connexion, and pretty plainly intimating their expectation that the society would follow their example, and dismiss their pastor, who stood convicted by his own confession of many capi-

had always been kind, and which will either deliver us from the evil, or inspire us with fortitude to endure it."

Upon these generous and pious principles did this Christian confessor act throughout the whole of this arduous conflict; and however his ignorant and malignant persecutors might injure his good name, and deprive him and his family of the comforts of society, and leave them destitute of the necessities of life, they could not rob him of the inestimable treasure of an approving conscience. How rapidly and extensively must the cause of Christian truth prevail, if all who were convinced of it possessed the fortitude and zeal of Mr. Sherman! But this is an elevation of character to which every one cannot attain. Different persons have different gifts, and are called to different duties. Let every one judge impartially for himself, and candidly for others.

fal errors. This advice, though treated with merited neglect by a majority of the church, nevertheless made a considerable impression upon a small number of feeble-minded members, who, in April, 1805, addressed a letter to the *venerable* association, expressing their dissatisfaction with their worthy pastor for denying, as they express it, that "the *man* Christ Jesus is truly and properly God;" which, say they, "is a doctrine which we cannot be persuaded to give up but with the Bible which contains it." And they further profess that "the doctrine of a Trinity of Persons in the Godhead, as *held by Calvinistic divines for ages*, is a doctrine clearly taught in the holy Scriptures;" and that, "however mysterious and incomprehensible, it lies at the very basis of Christianity." Under these difficulties, they implore the advice of the reverend Association. But notwithstanding all the activity of Deacon Southworth, and the artifices and intrigues of some bigots in the neighbourhood, only ten signatures could be procured to this address. Such however was the eagerness of the venerable body, and such their zeal to exterminate heresy, that they immediately directed an answer to be sent to the complainants, advising them to have recourse to a Council or Consociation, which is an Ecclesiastical Court consisting of ministers and messengers, and invested by law with great and indefinite powers. But as the *Consociation* was to consist in a great measure of the same ministers of whom the *Association* was formed, who had already prejudged the cause, and as the congregation at Mansfield had never acknowledged the jurisdiction of this Court, they rejected the advice with the contempt it deserved. Nevertheless, as this worthy confessor saw that his unrelenting adversaries were determined to pursue every possible method to disturb the peace of the society, and to accomplish his ruin, and being desirous of preventing the disastrous consequences of religious discord, he came to the resolution of resigning his pastoral office. This resolution he communicated to his friends; and at his

desire the church and congregation concurred with him in inviting, according to the custom of the country, a *Mutual Council* of respectable ministers to give their advice in the case, and, if they should judge it expedient, to grant Mr. Sherman an honourable dismission and recommendation.

This council assembled in October, 1805, and Mr. Sherman first stated his case, and the reasons which led him to wish to resign his connexion with the congregation at Mansfield. After which, a deputation from the church, that is, from the communicants,* were heard on their own behalf; who stated, that

* It may not perhaps be known to the generality of readers, that, in the strict independent form of church government, the whole power of ecclesiastical discipline, the entire management of the property, and the sole right of choosing or dismissing a minister, is vested in the church, that is, in the body of communicants, of those who have been admitted into the communion of that church in particular, according to its prescribed forms, or who have been received by regular dismission from other churches. Mere subscribers have no vote, however numerous and opulent. Mr. Howard, the celebrated philanthropist, was the richest member, and the most liberal supporter of the congregation at Bedford; he also joined statedly in communion with the church; but not having been regularly admitted into the church, he was only regarded as an occasional communicant; and in the choice of a minister, not the least attention was paid to his expressed opinion and desire, and a minister was chosen who was by no means acceptable to him.

In Northamptonshire I recollect another instance in which a venerable minister of irreproachable character, of most amiable manners, and unimpeached orthodoxy, was dismissed from his office by the church, under some trifling pretence, in opposition to the sense of by far the most respectable part of the congregation. His friends appealed to a court of law, to reinstate their respected minister in his office. But Lord Mansfield, who whatever might be his political delinquencies, was a most liberal and impartial judge in all cases in which the rights of Protestant Dissenters were concerned, demanded to see the writings of the place: and finding that they vested the communicants with the discretionary power of choosing and deposing a minister, he dismissed the cause immediately, and the worthy veteran was obliged to resign his claims. Another chapel however was provided for him, where he continued to

though the discontented party did not constitute more than one third of the *church*, yet they plainly perceived that their design was first to exclude their pastor, and then to excommunicate their brethren. That, in order to prevent this schism, they had offered to the complainants either that they should remain unmolested with the majority; or, that the majority, for the sake of peace, should dismiss their pastor, in order to remain unmolested with them; or, if this would not satisfy their opponents, Mr. Sherman's friends would retain and maintain their own minister, and let the discontented party have theirs. This concession, however, liberal as it was, did not satisfy the dissidents. Lastly, a deputation from the *Congregation* were heard before the Council, who stated, that not less than nine-tenths of the society were well satisfied with their minister, and had no desire to part with him, or to restrain him in his enquiries. "Being," as they express it, "tenacious of the right of private judgment, they wish to indulge their minister in the same: neither would they wish that he should act the hypocrite to gain the approbation of any man. And they apprehend that, in case Mr. Sherman is dismissed, the society will soon be found "in a most unhappy situation, not likely to be settled with another minister for many years."

officiate, and was supported by his friends as long as he lived.

In America, it is presumed that where the independent form of church government prevails, this principle is in general maintained. But in Connecticut, they have strangely deviated from the original freedom of the separate churches, by the institution of what is called the Consociation, a sort of spiritual court, which was established in Connecticut in the beginning of the last century. This court has power to interfere "upon all occasions ecclesiastical," and its censures are authorised and supported by the civil power. Each Consociation consists of ministers and messengers from every congregation which belongs to it. But no congregation is compelled to join it. As far as its power extends, it is properly a court of inquisition; and in some cases the members have discovered too much of an inquisitorial spirit.

Notwithstanding however these strong facts, this noble profession, and this conciliatory spirit, the *prudent* Council proceed, as a matter of expediency, to dismiss Mr. Sherman from his connection with the society : and while they bear honorable testimony to his character and talents, and “recommend him to the kind reception of those who may see fit to employ him,” they cautiously subjoin, that they “do not consider themselves as giving their approbation of Mr. Sherman’s *peculiar phraseology* or *circumstantial difference* of sentiment on the subject of the Trinity.” And in their subsequent advice to Mr. Sherman, they admonish him to guard against a bold spirit of speculation, and an inordinate love of novelty.

It is not a little curious to contrast those differences of opinion which this venerable Council coolly describes under the soft expressions of *peculiar phraseology* and a *circumstantial difference* of sentiment. The man whom they gravely caution against a bold spirit of speculation and inordinate love of novelty, asserts the doctrine, that there is One God, the sole object of religious worship, and one Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus, who is the prophet and messenger of God. While his orthodox opponents, to accommodate whom the Council think it expedient to dismiss their exemplary pastor, maintain a doctrine essential to salvation, and which they can never give up but with the Bible which contains it,” that “the man Jesus is truly and properly God.” Is the venerable Council serious in stating differences so glaring and so substantial as these, as nothing more than a “*peculiar phraseology*” and a “*circumstantial difference of sentiment*”? No! No! Opinions such as these can no more harmonize with each other than light and darkness, than Christ and Belial.—They who hold doctrines so diametrically opposite cannot be fellow-worshippers in the same temple. It was expedient that they should separate. So far the Council judged right. But the difficulty lies in discovering the expedience, the justice, the common sense

of making the greater submit to the less ; in deciding in opposition to the declared principles and wishes of two-thirds of the church and nine-tenths of the congregation. It is not to be doubted that the members of this Council were upright and honorable men. But as the case now stands, it is impossible to approve of their decision. Why is the majority to be sacrificed to the minority? Why is the upright, conscientious enquirer after truth to fall a victim to bigotry, ignorance, and intolerance? This surely is a miserable way of promoting either truth or peace. So the members of this truly respectable but too timid and cautious Council have themselves seen reason to acknowledge; and one of them at least has amply redeemed his character, and has himself very lately become a fellow-sufferer in the cause of truth.*

* This gentleman is the Rev. Abiel Abbot, late pastor of the first church in Coventry in the state of Connecticut, where he was settled in February 1795, and continued to exercise his ministry peaceably and acceptably for fifteen years. In February 1810, some of the members of his church discovered in the worthy pastor symptoms of heresy, and after some discussion the church applied for advice to the Association which assembled in October, who again referred them to the Consociation which assembled in April, 1811. The Consociation summoned the worthy pastor to reply to the charge: but Mr. Abbot protested against their jurisdiction; neither himself, nor the church of which he was pastor, nor the congregation having ever joined the Consociation, or acknowledged its authority. The society likewise entered a similar protest. The Consociation however, nothing daunted, voted its own competency and authority, and in their way proceeded to examine the merits of the case: the result of which was, that the Rev. Abiel Abbot does neither preach nor believe the doctrine of the sacred Trinity;—that he does neither preach nor believe the divinity of Jesus Christ:—that he does neither preach nor believe the doctrine of the atonement by the blood of Christ, nor of justification by his imputed righteousness;—and that doctrines contrary to these, and subversive of the Christian's faith and hope, are by him taught and inculcated. Voted, That the man who neither believes nor preaches the doctrines specified, is disqualified for the office of the Gospel ministry; for he has essentially renounced the Scriptures, has made shipwreck of faith, has denied the Messiah, &c. The Council therefore feel them-

Mr. Sherman being thus unexpectedly dismissed from a congregation where he had passed eight years

selves required by Jesus Christ, the great God and Saviour, &c. to declare, and they hereby do declare, that the ministerial relation between the Rev. A. A. and the first church at Coventry ought to be, and is dissolved, &c.

Such at the commencement of the nineteenth century was the language, and such were the extravagant claims, of an assembly of Protestant Christian Ministers, assuming the title of the Consociation of the County of Tolland in the State of Connecticut. Neither the Fathers of the Council of Trent, nor those of Nice, nor of any intervening Council, whether general or special, ever pretended to higher authority, nor made a bolder claim to inspiration or infallibility.

Mr. Abbot however, and his friends, the great majority of his society, not feeling themselves inclined to submit to the dictates of the inspired Council, resolved that the unwarranted censure of the Consociation should have no effect upon their mutual connexion; and he still continued to officiate among them as before. Nevertheless, to guard on the one hand against the interposition of the secular arm, and on the other to testify his respect to the Council itself, the members of which were individually respectable, this amiable and persecuted confessor thought it advisable to invite a Mutual Council of grave and learned divines from the State of Massachusetts, to deliberate how far it was his duty to respect the decision of the Tolland Consociation. The very sensible and pious answer of Dr. Osgood, who declined attending, contains many very just and pertinent observations. "For myself," says he, "I have little faith in, or respect for, Ecclesiastical Councils. I have long thought them unauthorised in Scripture, and for the most part worse than useless, excepting as mere referees or arbiters mutually chosen by parties at variance to settle their disputes." Speaking of the censure of the Consociation, he adds, "It is indeed a most extraordinary procedure, in this land of republican liberty, where all Ecclesiastical Establishments are explicitly disclaimed. This consideration, however, assures you, that though the tongues and pens of Ecclesiastical Councils be as free and unrestrained as those of any other description of citizens, yet they have no power to execute their decrees; and you have no more reason to tremble at the anathema of the Consociation of Tolland County, than at a bull of the Roman Pontiff. It might, therefore, perhaps, be advisable to let it pass with a little notice; suffering it to have no other effect than to render you a better Christian and a better man."

These are the observations and advice of a wise and good man; which perhaps it would have been most prudent to have

in harmony and usefulness, now found himself cast out upon the world destitute almost of the necessities of life, and under the ban of a powerful party, who were determined to the utmost to obstruct his future exertions, and to drive him from the ministry. Happily, though the will was good, the power was wanting. The pastor and the congregation appear to have regarded it as their duty to acquiesce in the decision of the council, however painful: and in an affecting address which was presented by the Society to Mr. Sherman, they express their deep regret at the unexpected dissolution of their connexion, when they most wished for its continuance,—when they most wanted

followed. The Mutual Council, however, convened by Mr. Abbot and his friends, assembled at Coventry on the 5th of June, 1811, the venerable Dr. Lathrop in the chair; and after due deliberation, they conclude that “the Consociation had no right to dissolve the connexion between the pastor and the society, the great majority of whom manifest a warm attachment to his person and ministry; but, that from considerations of expediency, they do dissolve it, and declare that it is dissolved accordingly.” Thus again, we see the sacred cause of Christian truth, sacrificed to a mean and temporising policy; and the faithful champion of truth, the amiable, useful, and beloved pastor, torn from his weeping flock, and consigned to poverty and solitude, for the sake of preserving a hollow, deceitful, temporary peace. But this cannot last long; nor can such a measure be approved by the great Head of the church. Of this strange event, the virtuous sufferer has published a fair and interesting narrative, which is written with a temper and spirit truly Christian. “I will bring,” says he, “no railing accusation. The men from whom I have differed, I have loved: the men from whom I have suffered, I have respected; and to none am I conscious, to this hour, of feeling an unfriendly sentiment. From the heart I wish them grace, mercy, and peace.” It is, however, but justice to the members of this perhaps, too cautious Council, to add, that they do not presume to judge of the faith of their unfortunate brother; that they express the highest respect for his moral character, and that they cordially recommend him to the pastoral office in some other church. And if there be, as I am sure there is, a love of truth, virtue, and liberty, in the New-England States, this able, honest, and pious sufferer for truth, will not be suffered to remain long in silence and seclusion.

his ministerial services and friendly counsels,—and when he stood highest in their esteem, and had engaged their warmest affections. This address was voted, November 12th, 1805, and the answer to it is dated from Oldenbarneveld, January 1, 1806. Mr. Sherman's talents were not suffered to remain long unemployed; and he appears almost immediately after his dismissal, to have been invited to undertake the pastoral charge of the small congregation which had been collected chiefly by the labours of the excellent Adrian Vanderkemp. And to enable him to remove his family to this distance, he received a very handsome pecuniary present from his friends at Mansfield, which he acknowledges with warm gratitude. At last this respectable society seems to have roused itself from its slumbers, and to have taken the step which it might have been expected that their affection would have dictated immediately upon their worthy pastor's dismissal. The church and the congregation invite him to resume the pastoral office at Mansfield. This invitation was dated December 19, but it was then too late. A scene of greater usefulness had, in his estimation, opened before him, and to this consideration he regarded it as his duty to sacrifice personal gratification and social enjoyment. But, in his reply to this application, he introduces a very judicious summary of the evidence of the Unitarian doctrine, and concludes with expressing his grateful sense of the kindness of his friends, and with a very impressive address to the youth of the congregation.*

* The conclusion of this worthy confessor's address to the youth of his late congregation at Mansfield, is so excellent, that no apology can be necessary for inserting it.

“To the great question in dispute, undoubtedly your minds are also directed. The subject is of primary importance, and demands your serious and attentive consideration. Surely you ought to know whether you are to be the worshippers of Three Gods, or of One God only. Let me exhort you to search the Scriptures diligently on this point, and see whether they teach you that three divine persons, three distinct moral agents, make, when added together, only one individual being. Should

For some years afterwards Mr. Sherman remained at Oldenbarneveld ; and in a letter to Mrs. Lindsey, dated November 5, 1807, the worthy Mr. Vanderkemp expresses himself thus favourably of the exertions and success of his respected coadjutor.

“It must fill Mr. Lindsey’s heart with gladness that his labours are blessed here in the wilderness, through the means of those, whom he enlightened and confirmed in the Gospel doctrine by his writings. Our pastor, with his amiable and worthy wife, has the greatest reason for gratitude to the Divine Being, being beloved, respected, and useful in spreading religious knowledge far and wide. Our situation, in a religious point of view, is very gratifying. Notwithstanding our pastor has to struggle with furious bigotry and ignorant superstition, which blacken his character and slander his innocence, while infidelity has her adherents through the whole country. That kind of writings are spread every where, and peddled round the country by hawkers in the wilderness, sometimes, under spurious titles. Volney and Paine, and Hellis are found in miserable cots and hovels, while it is often difficult to meet the sacred Scriptures. This evil has been nursed through the misconduct of high-flying Calvinist teachers in New-England in choosing their missionaries from the most stupid and bigotted ; perhaps from necessity : while men of talents among them decline the task. It is therefore not surprising that our pastor is heard with delight wherever there

the result of your investigation comport with the doctrine which I have taught you from the Scriptures, I wish you may be duly impressed with the importance of openly avowing it, and appearing as its advocates ; that as you rise into public life, you will never be ashamed of the interesting truth, but boldly and faithfully stand in its defence, though the multitude should be against you. Let your zeal, however, be well tempered with Christian charity. Be moderate and candid, liberal and catholic, in your treatment of those who may differ. Above all, always remember that the best orthodoxy is a faithful observance of the sacred precepts of that One God whom you profess and acknowledge.”

remains any claim to virtue and religion. His plain, affable manners, his energetic manner of preaching, his vast superiority over his antagonists in disputes, whenever they attack him, increase his influence every day. He preaches in the week twenty miles round, and is sanguine in his expectations that he shall form another society twelve miles from hence. Few weeks are passing in which some one or other of the vicinity do not join our church, and those by far the most respectable among them. Disney's Tracts and Seddon's Sermons have operated a great deal of good : so too have the works of my worthy friend, who now ere long shall receive the glorious reward of his labours. Our minister has instituted a school of moral instruction, in which every subject of natural and revealed religion is discussed freely."

In a letter dated April, 1809, Mr. Vanderkemp writes in a less sanguine, yet not altogether discouraging strain. "The Gospel cause gains slowly here and at Philadelphia. We have at length succeeded to re-engage our worthy minister," who it should seem was about to leave them for want of necessary support for his family. "His ministerial labours are not in vain. Well supplied with a tolerable library, he has seen it enlarged, by Mr. J. Priestley, and Mr. J. Taylor from Philadelphia, by some valuable additions. He deserves fully this encouragement. His talents are bright : his sermons are plain and persuasive ; his prayers devout and ardent ; and his conduct struck his slanderers dumb."

Unfortunately, whether it were owing to the inability of the congregation at Oldenbarneveld to raise an adequate income for the support of their worthy pastor ; or whether, as is often the case with persons of genius, and whose minds are devoted to intellectual pursuits, there might be on his part too little attention paid to economical arrangements ; in the next account we learn that Mr. Sherman was under the necessity of dissolving his connexion with his society, and that the flock was at that time left without a shepherd, and

in a state by no means encouraging. "The best that I can say about our situation is," says the excellent Mr. Vanderkemp, in a letter to Mrs. Lindsey, dated August, 1810, "that we are in a very torpid state. Since March we have no minister. Though a few doubled their subscriptions, though twice we took the defalcations of others on our account, we could not raise a sum adequate to his salary; so the connexion was dissolved, to our great grief and the irreparable loss of this community. We have resolved, however, and continue steadfastly our religious meetings. Some of us have engaged to read in turns; so that we are edified sometimes by Clarke, and Tillotson, sometimes by Blair, and sometimes by Lindsey, Priestley, Price, and Toulmin."

Of the present state of the Unitarian doctrine in the District of Maine, the author of this Memoir is not informed. Whether the congregation at Portland, collected by the worthy Mr. Oxnard, or that at Saco under the patronage of the truly excellent Mr. Thatcher, still exist, or in what state they now are, he has not heard. At Hallowell, the first families in the place are in their principles decidedly Unitarian; and it is hoped they will find some opportunity of erecting an altar to the ONE GOD, and that by the powerful influence of instruction and example they will diffuse the blessings of rational religion in a district which, under their auspices, is rapidly rising into opulence and distinction.

In the state of Massachusetts, and particularly in the environs of Boston, the great cause of Christian truth is making a silent but rapid and irresistible progress. From the inquisitive and liberal spirit which prevails in the University of Cambridge, which has never been checked at any time, but which there is reason to expect will receive every requisite aid and encouragement from the present learned and accomplished Principal, Dr. Kirkland, the happiest consequences may be expected to ensue.

The edition of Griesbach's Greek Testament with select various readings, and with the accurate and la-

borious author's latest corrections, a copy of which was procured in Germany by the reverend, learned, and eloquent Joseph S. Buckminster, which under his inspection has been elegantly and correctly reprinted in America, as a text-book for the Students of Harvard College, cannot fail to contribute essentially to the true interpretation of the Sacred Oracles. And a large and beautiful impression of the Improved Version with the Notes, published by my intelligent, learned, and valuable friend and correspondent, Mr. W. Wells, of Boston, whose zeal for truth is beyond all praise, will, it is hoped, contribute to the better understanding of difficult and doubtful passages in holy writ. The Monthly Anthology, the General Repository, and other valuable periodical publications, conducted by gentlemen of distinguished talents and liberality, tend very much to diffuse a spirit of inquiry. Bigotry is discountenanced; and, if I am not greatly misinformed, divine worship in many of the principal churches at Boston, is carried on upon principles strictly, if not avowedly Unitarian.*

* A very correct, certainly not a partial account of the present state of professed Unitarianism in the State of the Massachusetts, and particularly in Boston, has lately been published in the Monthly Repository for March and April, 1812, in a letter addressed by my highly esteemed friend the Reverend Francis Parkman, of Boston, to the Reverend John Grundy, in reply to a flattering account of the state of Unitarianism in Boston and its vicinity, contained in the Appendix to Mr. Grundy's eloquent discourse at the opening of a new place of worship at Liverpool. This account appears to have been communicated to my worthy friend by some person whose zeal in a good cause led him to see the objects of his wish in rather too favourable a light. See APPENDIX, *W. Wells' Letter*.

The following extract from a letter written by a minister in America to his friend in England, dated October, 1810, though somewhat long, will, it is hoped, be found both entertaining and important; it will throw much light upon the state of religion in Boston, and may give rise to some useful reflections.

"In my return home I spent the Sabbath at Templeton, and I preached twice. There are not more than forty or fifty families near the meeting; but they come in all directions from the woods and mountains in such numbers, as to make all together a goodly company. There being in almost every parish, especially in Massachusetts and Connecticut, a settled minister always of good morals, and generally of real piety, to administer divine ordinances to them, and lead them in the way of truth and duty, can scarcely fail having a good influence upon the people at large, in preserving them from that gross ignorance and grievous profligacy so prevalent in many countries that are called Christian. Nothing

Being myself a friend to ingenuousness and candour,
I could wish to see all who are truly Unitarians

would satisfy my son but I must, whilst in Boston, have my picture drawn : this cut up my time so very much, that I could not attend so many of their private meetings as I otherwise should. It was the General Election for the State ; the Democrats gained the ascendancy. I heard the Election Sermon preached by Dr. P. a very warm Federalist. He made it his business to expose the nefarious proceedings of the opposite party, in truth a most copious subject ; and was heard by the people in the galleries with high approbation, and almost clapping. The Convention Sermon (i. e. the Sermon preached before the General Assembly of Ministers) was preached by Dr. Porter. Full two hundred Ministers were in town. Their public business is transacted in the Court-House. The Convention has no ecclesiastical authority. Their proceedings and resolutions are merely advisory, but are not without considerable effect. The principal thing that came before them was a *complaint against some Missionaries* for going into parishes where there were settled Ministers, holding meetings without their knowledge, and even in opposition to their advice. The conduct of the Missionaries was *highly disapproved*. The Monday after the General Election for the State, there is always a Sermon preached to the Artillery Company. Mr. L. I was informed, gave them an excellent discourse, but I did not hear it. I went to the Meeting door, but the crowd was so great that I did not go in. The two Legislative Bodies, the Governor, and a number of the principal gentlemen and clergy, after the service was over, dined at Faneuil-Hall, a large building over the Market-House, where they have their town meetings and transact their town business. Mr. Jackson, the late British Minister, was there. I was invited to dine with them, but declined it. I was, however, introduced to Mr. Jackson at his lodgings, and once dined with him at Mr. B's. Mrs. Jackson with four other ladies were there, the rest of the party were gentlemen, about thirty in all. We had a splendid entertainment. Two courses of all the delicacies money could procure. Among the rest a dish of green peas, the first brought to market, which, the papers said, cost four dollars a bushel. The Bostonians paid Mr. Jackson great attention, and were much pleased with his behaviour while among them. I preached for Dr. E. Mr. B. Mr. L. and Mr. F. at the Stone Chapel. The last mentioned gentleman was never episcopally ordained ; of course, the Ministers who have been so, never exchange with him. In his place the Governor used to worship, when the State was a British colony. It is a large stone building, just like an English church. The other three are large and costly buildings, and have numerous assemblies meet in them. The galleries were designed principally for Negroes ; but there is now a Meeting built for the Africans to worship in by themselves. A Mulatto Minister preaches to them. There are said to be eleven or twelve hundred people of colour in the town. It was communion-day at Mr. B's ; there were about one hundred and fifty communicants. At Dr. E.'s there must have been two hundred. Never did I see such a display of plate on the communion-table. At Dr. E.'s there were five or six flagons which held from three to four quarts each ; six tankards, each containing a full quart ; two dozen of cups of various sizes and forms, with six large plates for the bread ; all handsome, and as bright as silver can be made. No person of a grain of sense can suppose these things to be of any importance. But as many of these people display great opulence in their own houses, I see nothing improper in their expending a portion of their superfluous wealth upon the house of God. A Charity Sermon is preached once a quarter for the benefit of the poor belonging to the Congregational

openly such, and to teach the doctrine of the simple indivisible Unity of God, as well as to practice the

Societies in this town. The Ministers of that denomination preach it in their turns, and the money is equally divided among the societies for distribution. About fourteen hundred dollars are collected in this way in the year. Mr. C. preached an excellent discourse, and is in truth a charming preacher; being remarkably serious and sensible, and universally liked. The place was quite full, though it will accommodate upwards of two thousand people. There is always a collection at the Convention Sermon for the relief of poor Ministers and their families. About six hundred dollars were collected on that occasion.—Though the people in Boston have lost much of their ancient rigidity respecting the Sabbath, great attention is paid to that day. Few resort into the country, and those who do, go early in the morning that they may not be noticed. Very few visit on that day, and but few are to be seen in the streets, except when going to or from public worship, and then the streets are crowded. At sun-set their Sabbath is considered as ended; the gentlemen often visit their friends, and the ladies sometimes take their work. In religious families the Saturday evenings are observed with strictness; but some, as might be expected, under pretence of keeping Saturday evening in preference to the other, keep neither. It is customary in the gayest, and even the most profligate, to connect themselves with some religious society, so far as to contribute to its support, and occasionally to attend. This is necessary if they would be thought of any consequence in society, and even to preserve themselves from ridicule and reproach. Dr. E. who has been a Minister at Boston above thirty years, tells me, he never knew a greater regard paid to religion in that town than now, nor does he think there ever was in his time more real goodness among them. On Election day, I dined with about thirty gentlemen at Mr. P.'s one of the Deacons of Dr. E.'s church. We had a most sumptuous entertainment. When they had drank two or three glasses of wine after dinner the company dispersed. This I find is a pretty general practice, and thus all temptation to drink to excess is avoided. Their graces before and after meals are generally longer than with you. That office is assigned to the Minister of the host, or to the oldest Minister present. Episcopalianism is at most only upon a level with other denominations. The Bostonians are very commendable for keeping very much to their own places of worship, and for speaking of their own Minister as one of the best preachers in the town. The Clergy seem to be comfortably supported, their salaries being from 1500 to 2000 dollars a year; and they are constantly receiving handsome presents. They very generally wear in the summer a silk gown and cassock, with a band; in the winter a cloth one; and altogether their worship is kept up in a splendid style. The pulpits throughout the country will hold from four to six ministers; and in Boston their rich cushions and curtains, or Venetian blinds, ornamented pillars and splendid chandeliers, give their Meetings a magnificent appearance. I think those which have been lately built are too large; a Minister must have a good voice to fill them. Boston is said to contain 30,000 people, and is increasing very fast. The ground on which the town stands is greatly elevated on the south-west. It makes a noble appearance from the country. The State-House on Beacon-hill is a magnificent structure. All their Meetings have steeples with one bell. That to the new Meeting in Park-Street is very lofty, and one of the handsomest I ever saw. It stands on high ground at the top of the Mall, is seen all round the country, and indeed beyond the Light-house far into Massachusetts bay. The High Calvinists who built this Meeting expected to have lessened the other congregations, but I

rites of Unitarian worship. But I would not presume to judge for another. There may possibly be

am told they have not yet done it. Should they get a popular Minister, I have no doubt there will be a large society: the disposition of the people for attending public worship being such, that I expect all their Meetings will be well attended. In the old part of the town the streets are narrow and crooked, but are much improved and improving in that respect. Formerly they were much exposed to depredations from fire, the houses being mostly built of wood. The danger from this quarter is lessening daily, as no buildings higher than fourteen feet are permitted to be erected of wood now. The town stands on a peninsula, joining to the main land only by a narrow neck on the south. They were, therefore, obliged to make use of boats to get to and from town. But since the war, five bridges have been built over the different waters that surround Boston and Charlestown, which are a vast convenience to the inhabitants. These bridges are all built of wood, and some of them are above a mile in length. The Ministers of Boston and that vicinity discover considerable accuracy and taste in their compositions, and generally speaking, may be considered as well furnished divines. Dr. O. is a man of very strong powers of mind; and though he distinguishes himself upon all public occasions, and especially those of a political nature, his general manner of preaching is very pious and edifying. The Clergy are invited to a great many good dinners. A Boston merchant would hardly think of making a dinner for his friends without inviting three or four Clergymen. Some that I once knew, I believe injured their health and shortened their days by eating and drinking too much. Those now on the stage, do not give into any excess."

For this long, but curious and interesting extract, I trust that the reader will require no apology. I will only add two brief reflections: First, that the Ministers of the Church of England are not the only persons who dislike itinerant intruders into parishes which are served by regular Clergymen. The spirit of all establishments is the same, whether the favoured sect be Episcopalian, Presbyterian, or Congregational. Secondly, may it be permitted to put the question without offence: Can it upon the common principles of human nature be reasonably expected of a body of Clergy, nursed in the lap of ease and affluence and placed in a station of such high secular consideration and comfort as that of the Ministers of Boston, that they should come forward and by an open profession of unpopular truth voluntarily risk the loss of all their temporal dignity and comfort, and incur the contempt and enmity of many who are now their warmest admirers and friends? I say not this by way of disparagement to the present body of Ministers in Boston and its neighbourhood. Some of these I have the pleasure to call my friends, and know them to be possessed of talents the most distinguished, of piety the most fervent, and of benevolence and zeal the most ardent, active and laudable; and of the rest I have heard a most favourable character. It is the situation, not the men, which excites my apprehensions. And who will venture to say of himself, that his virtue would be equal to the trial? Yet still it cannot reasonably be hoped that truth will make any visible and rapid progress, till her advocates rise above the fear of man and the love of ease, and are willing with the apostles of Christ and the reformers of every age, to forsake all and to sacrifice their dearest interests in her glorious cause. The encouragement and success which such faithful confessors would meet with in that populous and opulent city, would, I doubt not, be very great. The harvest truly is plenteous, it is ripe and ready to be gathered in. Highly honoured will that servant be to whom the great Master of the field shall communicate a portion of his energetic spirit, and shall say "Put in thy sickle and reap."

reasons for caution which do not occur to me, and of which I am not competent to judge. The time must however come, perhaps it is near, when truth will no longer endure confinement, but will burst forth in all her glory. The dull hollow rumbling at the bottom of the sea, which is scarcely noticed by the inattentive traveller who is gliding carelessly over the solid plate of ice which encrusts the surface, is, to the wary and experienced observer, a sure presage of the speedy and sudden explosion of the immense superincumbent mass, and of the restoration of the imprisoned waves to their native freedom, to the consternation and often to the utter destruction of those who refuse to listen to the friendly premonition.*

* See the interesting narrative of the very narrow escape of two Moravian Missionaries in travelling over the ice, in consequence of neglecting the advice of some friendly Esquimaux, in the history of the Mission of the United Brethren to Labrador.

APPENDIX.

From WILLIAM WELLS, Esq. of Boston, in New-England, to the Author.

BOSTON, MARCH 21, 1812.

My Dear Sir,

I AM glad to hear you received the Sermons safe. About six weeks ago I forwarded to Mr. Freme a parcel for you, containing the first No. of "The General Repository and Review." For this you are indebted to Mr. B. I think a letter from him accompanied the Review, but am not sure, as I took no memorandum of the contents of the parcel. A second number will shortly appear, which shall be forwarded by the earliest opportunity. I believe I mentioned in my last the name of the Editor, Mr. Norton, an excellent young man. Of his abilities you will be able to judge. I think the first article, and the Review of the Horsleian and Priestleian controversy display a soundness of judgment which at his age is rare. A number of young men who have taken their bachelor's degree now reside at Cambridge as theological students. Several of them are the sons of men of fortune, some, as far as I can judge, of superior talents; and all are pursuing their professional studies with a zeal which is well directed by the very worthy and learned Dr. Ware, professor of divinity, and Dr. Kirkland the president, and an honesty which is entirely unfettered and unbiassed by any system whatever. We have to contend here, as you in England, for the first principles of protestantism, but I see no reason to fear that the ensuing generation will be destitute of able champions for the right of private judgment.

With regard to the progress of Unitarianism, I have but little to say. Its tenets have spread very extensively in New-England, but I believe there is on-

ly one Church *professedly* Unitarian. The Churches at Portland and Saco, of which you speak, hardly ever saw the light, and exist no longer. The Mr. Thatcher who was formerly a Member of Congress, and the Judge T. whom Mr. Merrick mentions, are the same. He is one of the Judges of our Supreme Court, an excellent man and most zealous Unitarian. He is now on the circuit in this town, and tells me he is obliged on Sunday to stay at home, or to hear a Calvinist Minister. He is no relation to our friend.

Most of our Boston Clergy and respectable laymen (of whom we have many enlightened theologians) are Unitarian. Nor do they think it at all necessary to conceal their sentiments upon these subjects, but express them without the least hesitation when they judge it proper. I may safely say, the general habit of thinking and speaking upon this question in Boston, is Unitarian. At the same time the controversy is seldom or never introduced into the pulpit. I except the Chapel Church. If publications make their appearance attacking Unitarian sentiments, they are commonly answered with spirit and ability; but the majority of those who are Unitarian are perhaps of these sentiments, without any distinct consciousness of being so. Like the first Christians, finding no sentiments but those in the N. T. and not accustomed to hear the language of the N. T. strained and warped by theological system-makers, they adopt naturally a just mode of thinking. This state of things appears to me so favourable to the dissemination of correct sentiments, that I should perhaps regret a great degree of excitement in the public mind upon these subjects. The majority would eventually be against us. The ignorant, the violent, the ambitious and the cunning, would carry the multitude with them in religion as they do in politics. One Dr. M. in a contest for spreading his own sentiments among the *great body* of the people, would, at least for a time, beat ten Priestleys. Not to dwell upon the consideration, that Unitarianism consists rather in *not* believing;

and that it is more easy to gain proselites to absurd opinions, than to make them zealous *in refusing* to believe. With what arms, when the *οι πολλοι* are the judges, can virtue and learning and honour contend with craft and cunning and equivocation and falsehood and intolerant zeal? Learning is worse than useless, virtue is often diffident of her own conclusions, and, at any rate, more anxious to render men good Christians, than to make them Christians of her own denomination; and that self-respect, which is the companion of virtue, disdains to meet the low cunning of her adversaries, or to flatter the low prejudices of her judges. I think then it must be assumed as an axiom, that a persevering controversy upon this question, would render the multitude bigoted and persecuting Calvinists. Then come systems and catechisms in abundance. Every conceited deacon, every parishoner who has, or thinks he has, a smattering in theology, becomes the inquisitor of his pastor. In such circumstances learning and good sense have no chance. They cannot be heard.

The violent party here have chosen to meet their opponents upon very unfavourable ground. Instead of making it a cause of orthodoxy against heresy, they have very unwisely preferred to insist upon a subscription to articles of faith. This has given great offence to many who are disposed to be in favour of their creed, and thrown them into the opposite scale. Dr. Osgood is really orthodox in sentiment, but a noble and determined supporter of the right of private judgment, and on the best possible terms with our Boston friends. This is also the case with the venerable Dr. Lathrop of West-Springfield, Mr. Palmer's friend, and many others. In short we are now contending for the liberty of being Protestants. If we can persuade the people (and we stand upon advantageous ground) that we have the right to think upon religious subjects as our consciences and the scriptures direct, things will go on well. Learning, good sense, and virtue, will then produce their natural ef-

fects, and just modes of thinking upon subjects of this nature, as upon all others, will necessarily prevail.

Will you, my dear Sir, excuse unintentional prolixity? I do not know that you will approve my sentiments, nor am I very confident of their justness; but I have seen the contest between truth and falsehood, *before the multitude*; between every thing which is respectable and every thing which is detestable, so unequal in politics, that I dread the event in matters of religion. Still I would be no advocate for timidity, much less for any thing like equivocation, or evasion; and it must be confessed, that prudence often degenerates into these vices.

I am, dear Sir,

With the greatest esteem,

Yours affectionately,

W. WELLS, JUR.

Extract of a Letter from THOMAS JEFFERSON, Esq. President of the United States, to DR. PRIESTLEY, upon his "Comparative View of SOCRATES and JESUS."

WASHINGTON, APRIL 9, 1803.

Dear Sir,

While on a short visit lately to Monticello, I received from you a copy of your *Comparative View of Socrates and Jesus*, and I avail myself of the first moment of leisure after my return to acknowledge the pleasure I had in the perusal, and the desire it excited to see you take up the subject on a more extensive scale. In consequence of some conversations with Dr. Rush in the years 1798—99, I had promised some day to write him a letter, giving him my view of the Christian system. I have reflected often on it since, and even sketched the outlines in my own mind. I should first take a general view of the moral doctrines of the most remarkable of the ancient philosophers, of whose ethics we have sufficient information to make an estimate: say, of Pythagoras, Epicurus, Epictetus, Socrates, Cicero, Seneca, Antoninus. I should do justice to the branches of morality they have treated well, but point out the importance of those in which they are deficient. I should then take a view of the deism and ethics of the Jews, and shew in what a degraded state they were, and the necessity they presented of a reformation. I should proceed to a view of the life, character, and doctrines of Jesus, who, sensible of the incorrectness of their ideas of the Deity, and of morality, endeavoured to bring them to the principles of a pure deism, and juster notions of the attributes of God, to reform their moral doctrines to the standard of reason, justice, and philanthropy, and to inculcate the belief of a future state. This view would purposely omit the question of his divinity, and even of his inspiration. To do him justice, it would be necessary to remark the disadvantages his doctrines have to encounter, not having been committed to

writing by himself, but by the most unlettered of men, by memory, long after they had heard them from him, when much was forgotten, much misunderstood, and presented in very paradoxical shapes. Yet such are the fragments remaining, as to shew a master workman, and that his system of morality was the most benevolent and sublime probably that has been ever taught, and more perfect than those of any of the ancient philosophers. His character and doctrines have received still greater injury from those who pretend to be his spiritual disciples, and who have disfigured and sophisticated his actions and precepts from views of personal interest, so as to induce the unthinking part of mankind to throw off the whole system in disgust, and to pass sentence as an impostor on the most innocent, the most benevolent, the most eloquent and sublime character that has ever been exhibited to man. This is the outline; but I have not the time, and still less the information which the subject needs. It will therefore rest with me in contemplation only.

THOMAS JEFFERSON.

From Dr. PRIESTLEY to Mr. LINDSEY, containing remarks upon Mr. JEFFERSON's Letter.

NORTHUMBERLAND, APRIL 23, 1803.

Dear Friend,

In my last I promised to send you a copy of Mr. Jefferson's Letter on reading my pamphlet entitled "Socrates and Jesus Compared." The above is that copy. He is generally considered as an unbeliever: if so, however, he cannot be far from us, and I hope in the way to be not only almost, but altogether what we are. He now attends public worship very regularly, and his moral conduct was never impeached.*

J. PRIESTLEY.

Extract of a Letter from Dr. PRIESTLEY, to Mr. LINDSEY, soon after his arrival in America.

NEW-YORK, JUNE 15, 1794:

—WITH respect to myself the difference is great indeed. In England I was an object of the greatest aversion to every person connected with government; whereas here they are those who show me the most respect. With you the Episcopal Church is above every thing. In this city it makes a decent figure, but the Presbyterians are much above them, and the Governor (Clinton), who is particularly attentive to me, goes to the meeting-house.

But the preachers, though all civil to me, look upon me with dread, and none of them has asked me to preach in their pulpits. This however does them no good. Several persons express a wish to hear me, and are ashamed of the illiberality of the preachers, and some are avowed Unitarians; so that I am fully persuaded an Unitarian minister, of prudence and good sense, might do very well here. If I were here a Sunday or two more I would make a beginning, and I intend to return for this purpose. The greatest difficulty arises from the indifference of liberal-minded men as to religion in general; they are so much occupied with commerce and politics. One man of proper spirit would be sufficient to establish a solid Unitarian Interest; and I am persuaded it will soon be done. As I am much attended to, and my writings, which are in a manner unknown here, begin to be inquired after, I will get my small pamphlets immediately printed here; and wherever I can get an invitation to preach I will go.

* See *Relehan's Life of Lindsey*, Appendix, p. 538—540.

With this view I shall carefully avoid all the party politics of the country, and have no other object besides religion and philosophy. Philadelphia will be a more favourable situation than this, and there I shall make a beginning. It will be better, however to wait a little time, and not show much zeal at the first; and as my coming here is much talked of, I shall reprint my Fast and Farewell Sermons.

I have written to Mr. Belsham, whom I hope, some time or other, to draw hither. He will tell you my scheme. But as I am soon going to Philadelphia, I shall soon know more on the subject.

I was never more mortified than I now am at not having with me any of my small tracts in defence of the divine unity, as my being here leads many persons to wish to read what I have written on the subject. I shall reprint them, and I flatter myself they will produce a considerable effect. Indeed my coming hither promises to be of much more service to our cause than I had imagined. But time is necessary, and I am apt to be too precipitate. I want your cool judgment. You waited patiently a long time in London; but what an abundant harvest have you had there.*

J. PRIESTLEY.

From the same to the same.†

PHILADELPHIA, JUNE 24, 1794.

With respect to religion, things are exactly in the same state here as in New-York. Nobody asks me to preach, and I hear there is much jealousy and dread of me; and on the whole I am not sorry for the circumstance, as it offends many who have, on this account, the greater desire to hear me; so that I have little doubt, but that I shall form a respectable Unitarian society in this place. The alarm of the danger of Unitarianism has been sounded so long, that it has ceased to be terrific to many, and I stand so well with the country in other respects, that I dare say I shall have a fair and candid hearing; and at my return from the Susquehanna, where I propose to go the next week, I believe some place will be prepared for me. In the mean time, I am preparing an edition of my Appeal and Trial of Elwall, which will be ready, I am told, by the next Monday. Part of the impression will be sent to New-York, where things are in as great forwardness as here. If I do not greatly deceive myself, I see a great harvest opening upon, and there is room for many labourers, but it will require great prudence and judgment at first.

I have almost determined to make my residence in Northumberland, and spend a few months of the winter in Philadelphia. I shall be, on the whole, of as much use in propagating Unitarianism, as if I resided in the town. I see so great certainty of planting Unitarianism on this continent, that I wish you and Mr. Belsham would be looking out for proper persons to establish in New-York and Philadelphia, and also to supply the College, which you may take for granted will be established at the place of my residence. A place of worship is building here by a society who call themselves Universalists. The society, I hear, intend to apply to me to open it, which I shall gladly do. A person with a proper spirit and prudence may do great things here. Mr. H. was the most imprudent of men; and did apparently much harm here; but eventually even that may be for the best. I find I have great advantages, and I hope to make a good use of them.

J. PRIESTLEY.‡

* *Memoirs*, p. 530—532. † *Memoirs*, p. 533. *App.*

‡ *Dr. Priestley died at Northumberland, (Penn.) Feb. 4, 1804. See Mem. p. 544, App.*

REVIEW

OF

AMERICAN UNITARIANISM.

[*Extracted from the Panoplist.*]

American Unitarianism; or a Brief History of "the Progress and Present State of the Unitarian Churches in America." Compiled, from Documents and Information communicated by the Rev. JAMES FREEMAN, D. D. and WILLIAM WELLS, jun. Esq. of Boston, and from other Unitarian Gentlemen in this country, by the Rev. THOMAS BELSHAM, Essex Street, London. Extracted from his "Memoirs of the Life of the Rev. THEOPHILUS LINDSER," printed in London, 1812, and now published for the benefit of Christian Churches in this country, without note or alteration. Third Edition. Boston; Nathaniel Willis. 1815. pp. 48.

WE regard the appearance of this pamphlet as one of the most important events, which have taken place for many years, in reference to the interests of religion in our country. It has been known, for at least a quarter of a century, by those who have been well-informed on the subject, that there has been in Boston a defection from those doctrines of the Bible, which have usually been denominated orthodox in Protestant communities. It has been known, that this defection

has gradually increased; has silently and covertly extended itself into a considerable number of congregations in the vicinity; and has been, in a few instances, openly avowed. From a great variety of anonymous publications it has been evident, that the defection had proceeded in the downward course to the lowest degrees of Socinianism, and to the very borders of open infidelity. Further than this;—it has not been in a few solitary instances only, that persons, who have been near the centre of all these operations, have heard from the pulpit both sermons and prayers, which neither expressed nor implied any thing more than sober Deism, and which were totally at variance with the Gospel. These things, and many more of a similar character, have warranted such disclosures through the medium of our work, and of other publications, as have fully apprized the Christian public of the existence of such a defection, as has been briefly described above. But as the work of error was carried on for the most part in secret;—as many well-meaning people were led in the dark;—and as proselytes were made principally by suppressing truth, rather than by explicitly proposing and defending error, it was a

difficult matter so to expose the evil, as to present its character, extent, and design, in full view, before the eyes of its friends and its enemies. It has been an artifice practised systematically by a majority of the clergymen, who have led the way in this apostasy from the faith of the Protestant churches, and, as we believe we may safely add, in this apostasy from Christianity, to inculcate the opinion, that they *did not differ materially* from their clerical brethren through the country. This artifice has been carried so far as to induce them to complain, in bitter terms, that they were slandered by our work, when represented as thus differing, and as promoting the circulation of Socinian books; although every representation, which we have made on the subject, has been warranted by most abundant evidence. They have complained, that they were not invited to preach when travelling through the country; and have imputed this neglect to the effect of slander. It is to be remembered, that the slander complained of is the allegation, that they *differ essentially in religious doctrine* from the great body of the American clergy. Within a very few months, a clergyman, who we feel authorized to say is a decided Socinian of the German school, complained that he was not invited to preach in New York; which he imputed to the slanders of the orthodox: and yet, at the very time of making this complaint, he must have known, that his *real opinions*, if openly avowed, would exclude him from nearly every pulpit south of Massachusetts. He must have known,

also, that no representations, made by the orthodox, ever placed the Boston clergy, generally, lower on the scale of religious doctrine, than his own opinions actually were.

We should not be thus particular, were it not that the cry of *calumny* has been raised with considerable effect, and with the most unblushing confidence. But this cry cannot be raised hereafter on the same account, and in the same manner. The pamphlet before us furnishes most decisive evidence, on the subject of the state of religion in Boston and the vicinity. It is evidence which can neither be evaded, nor resisted, by the liberal party; as it is taken wholly from a book, published by Mr. Belsham, who is at the head of that party in England, and who lays before the reader original letters from Dr. Freeman and Mr. Wells, authenticated by their proper names.

It will be asked, perhaps, what is the meaning of *Unitarianism*, as the word is used in this pamphlet? The inquiry is natural; and we answer it as follows. Mr. Belsham considers himself a consistent and decided Unitarian. He evidently supposes, also, that all consistent and decided Unitarians, on both sides of the water, agree substantially with him. That the reader may become acquainted with Mr. Belsham's opinions, we shall quote his own words. The length of the quotations will be excused, when the importance of the subject is considered.

The publisher of the pamphlet has introduced it with a very suitable preface, containing large extracts from *Belsham's Review*

of *Wilberforce's Treatise*. The greater part of these extracts we shall cite below, and add to them several passages from Mr. Belsham's *Calm Inquiry* and *Memoirs of Lindsey*.

"God is the Former, the Father, and Benefactor of the human race, whom for wise reasons, unknown to us, but perfectly consistent, no doubt, with his magnificent plan of universal order and happiness, he has been pleased to place in circumstances of frailty and danger, the natural consequence of which, in their progress through life, is the contraction of a certain degree of moral pollution, which in the nature of things, and by the divine appointment, exposes them to a proportionate degree of misery here or hereafter.

"But this fact by no means proves a preponderance of vice and misery in the world; otherwise we must conclude that the Maker of the world, whose character we learn only from his works, is a weak or a malignant being. The truth is, that although the quantity of vice and misery actually existing is very considerable, there is, nevertheless, upon the whole, a very great preponderance of good in general, and with few, if any exceptions, in every individual in particular.

"The almost universal desire of life and dread of dissolution, amount to a strong presumption, that life is in general a blessing. And the disgrace universally attached to flagrant vice, proves that such vice is not common. Character is the sum total of moral and intellectual habits, and the proportion of virtuous habits in the worst characters, exceeds that of vicious ones. But no character takes the denomination of virtuous unless *all* the habits are on the side of virtue: whereas *one* evil habit is sufficient to stamp a character vicious.

"God cannot be unjust to any of his creatures. Having brought men into existence and placed them in circumstances of imminent peril, though in the nature of things misery is necessarily connected with vice, we may certainly conclude that none of the creatures of God in *such*, or in *any* circumstances, will ever be made *eternally miserable*. Indeed it is plainly repugnant to the justice of God, that existence to any of his intelligent creatures, should be upon the whole a curse.

"The light of philosophy affords a few plausible arguments for the doctrine of a future life: there are some appearances physical and moral, which cannot be satisfactorily explained upon any other supposition. But since the sentient pow-

ers are suspended by death, and admit of no revival but by the revival of the man, a fact the expectation of which is entirely unsupported both by experience and analogy, the speculations of philosophy would commonly, and almost necessarily, terminate in the disbelief of a future existence.

"Here divine revelation offers its seasonable and welcome aid. God has commissioned his faithful and holy servant, Jesus of Nazareth, to teach the universal resurrection of the dead, and by his own resurrection to confirm and exemplify his doctrine.

"Jesus hath authoritatively taught, that the wicked will be raised to suffering; nor could it possibly be otherwise, if they are to be raised with the same system of habits and feelings with which they descended to the grave, and without which their identity would be lost. But since eternal misery for temporary crimes is inconsistent with every principle of justice, and since a resurrection from previous insensibility to indefinite misery, to be succeeded by absolute annihilation, is a harsh supposition, contrary to all analogy, and not to be admitted but upon the clearest evidence, we are naturally led to conclude, that the sufferings of the wicked will be remedial, and that they will terminate in a complete purification from moral disorder, and in their ultimate restoration to virtue and happiness. In this conclusion we seem to be justified by those passages in the apostolical writings which declare, that the blessings of the Gospel shall be far more extensive than the calamities of the fall, and that Christ shall reign till all things shall be subdued unto him. (Rom. v.—1 Cor. xv.)

"The apostles were commanded to preach the Gospel to the idolatrous heathen as well as to the chosen family of Abraham, and they were authorized to confirm their doctrine by miracles. These extraordinary powers are in the Scriptures called the Spirit of God, and the Holy Spirit; and the great change which took place in the views, feelings, and character of pharisaic Jews and idolatrous heathen, when they sincerely professed the Christian faith, is called, a *new creation, regeneration, rising from the dead*, and the like. And as conversion to Christianity was usually produced by the evidence of miracles, this new creation, regeneration, sanctification, or passing from death to life, is in this sense ascribed to the Spirit of God.

"The Jews, having been chosen by God to peculiar privileges, entertained a very high notion of their own dignity, and expressed themselves in the most contemptuous language of the idolatrous gentiles, who were not in covenant with Je-

hovah. Of themselves they spoke as a *chosen and a holy nation, sons of God, and heirs of the promises*. But the heathens were represented as *sinners, as aliens, as enemies to God*, and the like. In allusion to which forms of expression, the converted gentiles being entitled equally with converted Jews, to the blessings of the new dispensation, they are therefore said to be *forgiven, reconciled, and saved*, to be *fellow-citizens* with the saints, and of the household of God.

"The death of Jesus is sometimes called a *propitiation*, because it put an end to the Mosaic economy, and introduced a new and more liberal dispensation, under which the gentiles, who were before regarded as enemies, are admitted into a state of amity and reconciliation; that is, into a state of privilege similar to that of the Jews. It is also occasionally called a *sacrifice*, being the ratification of that new covenant into which God is pleased to enter with his human offspring, by which a resurrection to immortal life and happiness is promised, without distinction, to all who are truly virtuous. Believers in Christ are also said to have *redemption through his blood*, because they are released by the Christian covenant from the yoke of the ceremonial law, and from the bondage of idolatry. Dr. Taylor has in general well explained these Jewish phrases in his admirable *Key to the apostolic writings* prefixed to his Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans.

"The Scriptures contain a faithful and credible account of the *Christian doctrine*, which is the *true word of God*: but they are not *themselves* the word of God, nor do they ever assume that title: and it is highly improper to speak of them as such, as it leads inattentive readers to suppose they were written under a plenary inspiration, to which they make no pretension, and as such expressions expose Christianity unnecessarily to the cavils of unbelievers.

"Christianity sums up the whole of human duty in the love of God and our neighbor; and requiring that *all* our time should be employed to the best account, and that every action should be consecrated to God, lays no stress upon ritual observations, and expressly abolishes that distinction of days, which formed so conspicuous a feature in the Mosaic institute. To a true Christian every day is a Sabbath, every place is a temple, and every action of life an act of devotion. A Christian is not required to be more holy, nor permitted to take greater liberties upon one day than upon another. Whatever is lawful or expedient upon one day of the week is, under the Christian dispensation,

equally lawful and expedient on any other day. Public worship, however, must be conducted at stated intervals; and it has been usual for the earliest times for Christians to assemble together, on the first day of the week, to commemorate the death and to celebrate the resurrection of their Master.

"This appears to me to be the true doctrine of reason and revelation, in which the God of nature is not represented as frowning over his works, and like a merciless tyrant dooming his helpless creatures to eternal misery, with the arbitrary exception of a chosen few; but as the wise, benevolent, and impartial parent of his rational offspring, who is training them all, under various processes of intellectual and moral discipline, to perfect virtue and everlasting felicity. Such is the God of my faith and adoration, the God of nature and of revelation, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, that God whose existence, attributes, and government are the joy and confidence of every enlightened and virtuous believer." See *Belsham's Review of Wilberforce's Treatise, Letter II.*

"The Unitarians generally believe, that Jesus having exercised his public ministry for the space of a year, and perhaps a little more, suffered death publicly upon the cross, not to appease the wrath of God, not as a satisfaction to divine justice, not to exhibit the evil of sin, nor in any sense whatever to make an atonement to God for it; for this doctrine in every sense, and according to every explanation, they explode as irrational, unscriptural, and derogatory from the divine perfections: but as a martyr to the truth, and as a necessary preliminary to his resurrection. And they hold, that it was wisely ordered, to preclude cavils, that his death should be an event of great public notoriety, and inflicted by his enemies." See *Belsham's Calm Inquiry into the Scripture Doctrine concerning the person of Christ*, pp. 449, 450.

"The Unitarians further believe, that after having given sufficient proofs to his disciples, for forty days, of the truth of his resurrection, he was in a miraculous manner withdrawn from their society, a circumstance which is described as an ascension into heaven." *Ib.* pp. 450, 451.

"The Unitarians maintain, that Jesus and his apostles were supernaturally instructed as far as was necessary for the execution of their commission, that is, for the revelation and proof of the doctrine of eternal life, and that the favor of God extended to the Gentiles equally with the

Jews; and that Jesus and his apostles, and others of the primitive believers, were occasionally inspired to foretell future events. But they believe, that supernatural inspiration was limited to these cases alone; and that when Jesus or his apostles deliver opinions upon subjects unconnected with the object of their mission, such opinions and their reasonings upon them, are to be received with the same attention and caution with those of other persons in similar circumstances, of similar education, and with similar habits of thinking.

"The Unitarians admit, that the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament, and especially the latter, contain authentic records of facts, and of divine interpositions; but they utterly deny the universal inspiration of the writers of those compositions, as a qualification to which indeed they make no pretension, and of which they offer no proof; and the assertion of which tends only to embarrass the evidences of revelation, and to give advantage to its enemies. And they judge of the genuineness, of the meaning, and of the credibility of these works, exactly in the same way as they judge of any other ancient writings." *Ib.* pp. 451, 452.

"The Unitarians disavow all those personal regards to Christ, and direct addresses to him, either of prayer or praise, which properly fall under the denomination of religious worship, as unfounded in reason, unauthorized by Scripture, derogatory from the honor of the Supreme Being, the only proper object of religious homage, and as in a strict and proper sense polytheistical and idolatrous." *Ib.* p. 454.

"The Unitarians think it superfluous to produce any arguments to prove, that a person, who is repeatedly called a man, who had every appearance of a human being, who was born, who grew, who lived, who conversed, who felt, who acted, who suffered, and who died like other men, who was universally believed to be a man by all who saw and conversed with him, and was addressed and spoken of as a human being by all his contemporaries, whether friends or enemies, was really what he appeared and affirmed himself to be, truly and properly a man, and nothing more than a man." *Ib.* pp. 455, 456.

"They observe, that there is no allusion at all to the supposed pre-existent state and superior nature of Jesus Christ, in three of the Evangelists, or in the history of the apostles' preaching, and of the first plantation of the Gospel contained in the

Acts of the Apostles; and that John is a very mystical writer, abounding in harsh metaphors and symbolical phraseology, very different from the simplicity which characterizes the other evangelists. Nor can they discern any traces of that surprise and astonishment, which must have seized the minds of the disciples and companions of Jesus, when it was first revealed to them, that the master with whom they had so frequently and familiarly conversed, was the Lord their Maker, or at least a great celestial spirit in a human shape." pp. 456, 457.

"The Unitarians do not presume to say that God might not, if he had pleased, have revealed other doctrines to mankind by Jesus Christ, besides that most important one of a future life. But they profess, that after reading the New Testament with the greatest attention, this doctrine appears to be the one great object of the Christian revelation, which is in this view most worthy of God, and most beneficial to men." p. 470.

"Believing that Jesus was in all respects like unto his brethren, and pursuing his principles to their just consequences, he [Dr. Priestley] argued that our Savior came into the world with the frailties and infirmities of a human being, moral as well as physical, and that, by the peculiar process of mental discipline to which he was subjected, he grew up to that consummate dignity and elevation of character, under which he appears in the writings of the Evangelists. And this truly Christian philosopher believed it to be not only a more rational way of accounting for the excellence of our Lord's character, and more agreeable to the language of the New Testament, which represents him as growing in wisdom and in favor with God and man, but, in truth, more honorable to our Lord himself, that his perfect moral excellence should be the result of his own exertion, vigilance, and fortitude, rather than of a supernatural operation." See *Belsham's Memoirs of Lindsey*, pp. 225, 226.

"In the present day, the alarm having subsided, and a cooler examination of the subject having taken place, it would, I believe, be hard to find any considerate and consistent Unitarian, who does not adopt Dr. Priestley's ideas concerning the formation of our Lord's moral character." *Ib.* p. 226.

"The Unitarian doctrine is, that Jesus of Nazareth was a man constituted in all respects like other men, subject to the

same infirmities, the same ignorance, prejudices, and frailties." *Ib.* as quoted by Dr. Magee, in his great work, p. 510.

" "Jesus is indeed now alive. But as we are totally ignorant of the place where he resides, and of the occupations in which he is engaged, there can be no proper foundation for religious addresses to him, nor of *gratitude* for favors now received, nor yet of confidence in his future interposition in our behalf." See *Review of Wilberforce's Treatise, Letter VIII.*

MR. LINDSEY'S CREED.

" "There is ONE GOD, one single person who is God, the sole Creator and Sovereign Lord of all things.

" "The holy Jesus was a man of the Jewish nation, a servant of this God, highly honored and distinguished by him.

" "The Spirit, or Holy Spirit, was not a person or intelligent being, but only the extraordinary power or gift of God, first to our Lord Jesus Christ himself in his life time, and afterwards to the Apostles and many of the first Christians, to empower them to preach and propagate the Gospel with success." See *Memoirs of Lindsey*, p. 212.

The foregoing quotations are sufficient to give the reader some acquaintance with the religious opinions of leading Unitarians. We will only add, that Mr. Belsham clearly adopts the opinion of Dr. Priestley, that "our Savior was as much in the dark, as the most vulgar among the Jews, about possessions; and believed them in the gross literal sense."

Our readers will excuse us, if, for the sake of making a brief summary of doctrines held by Unitarians, as exhibited in the preceding extracts, we give the substance of the several articles by way of recapitulation. Unitarians hold and teach, then,

That God has placed man in circumstances of frailty and danger, the natural consequence of which is the contraction of a certain degree of moral pollution, which exposes them to a propor-

tionate degree of misery here or hereafter;

That there is a very great preponderance of virtue over vice in the world; and with few, if any, exceptions, in every individual;

That the proportion of virtuous habits in the worst characters, exceeds that of vicious ones;

That we may certainly conclude, from our own reason, that none of the creatures of God will ever be made eternally miserable;

That God commissioned Jesus of Nazareth to teach the universal resurrection of the dead, and by his own resurrection to confirm and exemplify his doctrine;

That the wicked will be raised to suffering, with the same system of habits and feelings with which they descended to the grave; but their sufferings will be remedial, and will terminate in their ultimate restoration to virtue and happiness;

That the Holy Spirit was nothing more than the power of working miracles;

That regeneration, and the new creation, mean only the conversion of the Gentiles to the profession of Christianity;

That as the Gentiles were converted to Christianity by the evidence of miracles, this new creation was in this sense ascribed to the Spirit of God;

That because the Gentiles were admitted to enjoy the blessings of the new dispensation, they are said to be forgiven, reconciled and saved;

That the death of Jesus is called a *propitiation* because it put

an end to the Mosaic economy;

That it is called a *sacrifice*, because it was the ratification of a new covenant, which promised a resurrection to immortal life;

That believers in Christ are said to have *redemption by his blood*, because they are released from the yoke of the ceremonial law, and the bondage of idolatry;

That the Scriptures were not written under a plenary inspiration;

That the Sabbath is no more holy than any other day; and, consequently, that it is lawful to do the same things on that day as on any other;

That Christ made no atonement for sin, in any sense whatever;

That the great object of Christianity was the revelation of a future life;

That whenever Jesus, or his apostles, deliver opinions on subjects unconnected with the object of their mission, their opinions are to be received with the same caution as the opinions of other persons;

That the Scriptures contain authentic records of facts and of divine interpositions, but were not written by men under the constant influence of inspiration;

That all religious homage paid to Christ is strictly polytheistical and idolatrous;

That Christ was no more than a man;

That he came into the world with all the frailties and infirmities of a human being, *moral* as well as physical, and his perfect moral character was formed by his own exertion, vigilance, and fortitude, without supernatural aid;

That after his resurrection he was miraculously withdrawn from his disciples, which was described as an ascension to Heaven; but we know not where he resides now, and ought not to feel gratitude to him for favors now received, nor to expect his future interposition in our behalf; and

That, on the subject of demoniacal possessions in particular, he, like the mass of his nation was involved in gross darkness, and actually believed that to be true, which the wisdom of modern times has discovered to be false.

Such is the Unitarianism which Mr. Belsham wishes to propagate, and of which he professes to write the history; so far, at least, as relates to its progress in this country. Of the existence of such Unitarianism, in the metropolis of New England, our readers have generally been well persuaded; but some have not believed that it was making any considerable progress, because they could not persuade themselves that men, occupying important places in church and state, and standing high in the public estimation were capable of concealing their true sentiments. Others have affected not to believe, because they feared the consequences of an exposure of sentiments so very diverse from those maintained by our pious fathers, and still cherished by a great majority of pastors and churches in the New England states. Some of our friends at a distance, who sit under their own vine and fig tree without molestation, occasionally feel, that our fears respecting the efforts to

spread Socinian principles are magnified beyond measure, in consequence of our living in the centre of Unitarian action. We almost envy them their peaceful undisturbed lot. One of the last things, which a Christian should desire, is, to be called to dispute with his fellow men, who bear the Christian name, respecting that blessed religion, which proclaims *peace on earth, and breathes good will to man*. Yet, however distressing this duty is, and however exposed to temptation one may be in performing it; there are times when the obligation becomes imperious, to *contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints*; and to place in their just light the efforts of those, whom we in conscience believe to be really striving to overturn this faith, whatever they may suppose to be the tendency of their measures.

There is a certain class of well-meaning people, who are reluctant to enter upon any controversial discussion, and who are ready to say, on all occasions, that they are sorry to see religious controversy. These persons ought to reflect much upon the meaning of such declarations: Do they intend, that the essential truths of the Gospel will never be attacked; or that, if attacked, they should never be defended; or that there are no essential truths of the Gospel; or that, if there are such truths, it is impossible to ascertain what they are; or that error will die of itself, if never exposed. If they will assume either of these positions, they will find it untenable. They ought to consult the history of the church,

which will convince them, that the purity of religion has never been restored, in a single instance, without religious controversy; and that it has never been preserved, for any length of time, without resorting to the same means of defence. We readily admit, that there has been much unnecessary, and much very pernicious controversy in the church; that long and bitter disputes have originated on trifling occasions, and been conducted with unchristian feelings, and for very insufficient reasons, on both sides. All this is a proof of human weakness and depravity; but we see not how it tends to prove that all controversies are wrong, as it respects all the contending parties.

Political disputes have, in a vast proportion of instances, been the means of incalculable evil. Yet who supposes it to be wrong to oppose political error? Would not the suppression of all political controversy bring the world immediately into a state of the most abject submission to the most corrupt and despotic rulers? The fact is, that important truth of every kind, whether scientific, political, moral, or religious, must be taught and defended; but particularly religious truth; for the natural feelings of men are much more opposed to this, than to truth of any other kind. We are far from considering controversy of any sort as in itself desirable; we are far from justifying a disputatious temper, or encouraging dogmatical habits; we could earnestly wish, indeed, that the Christian world were immediately freed from all occasion of controversy. The time

will come when controversy shall cease; but this time will not be hastened by the timid counsels of those, who would suffer the abettors of false doctrine to repeat their assertions and their sophistry without examination and without an answer. Controversy will only cease by the universal reception of the truth, not by a complaisant deference to be exercised by the friends of truth to the promoters of all kinds of error. One great complaint of the Papists against the leading Protestants at the commencement of the Reformation, was, that they introduced the terrible evil of *religious controversy*. What would have become of the Reformation, if that complaint had been admitted as valid, and the Reformers had shut their mouths and thrown away their pens? It may be confidently affirmed, that Luther, Calvin, and Zuinglius, with the word of God in their hands and the love of God in their hearts, did more good in a few years, by entering boldly into the lists of theological controversy, than the same men with all their great talents could have done in fifty centuries, (had their lives been thus prolonged,) in the silent course recommended by those, who affect to decry all controversy. Is not the truth as important now as it was at the era of the Reformation? Is not Christ as precious to the souls of believers now as he was then?

Before any person is entitled to stigmatize a controversial writing as useless or injurious, he must be satisfied, either that their is no occasion for it; that it relates to an unimportant subject; that it defends error rather

than the truth; or that it is conducted in an unfair manner, or with an unchristian temper. When a controversy can be truly described as liable to either of these objections, we will not justify it. But we shall always hold in high honor those servants of God, who have it in their power to employ learning and talents not only in teaching the truth, but in detecting and exposing the absurdities of error.

We are sincere believers in the great doctrines of the Reformation; in the inspiration of the Holy Scriptures; in the unity and perfections of the Godhead; in the Supreme divinity of the Son and Spirit; in the atonement and intercession of Christ; in the native and total depravity of the unregenerate; and in the reality and necessity of special divine grace to renew and sanctify the souls of men, that they may be capable of participating in the holy enjoyments of the heavenly world. These points do not constitute the whole of our creed, but they are among the prominent and fundamental articles of it; they are points in which we differ essentially from Unitarians.

Believing conscientiously, that these doctrines are essential to Christianity, we have ever felt it to be our duty to resist, so far as lay in our power, every effort to supplant them, by substituting others, which, as they appear to us, can neither administer present comfort, nor lay any just foundation for future hopes. We readily concede, that Christianity in any form, even in that of Catholic superstition, or the lowest Socinianism, is preferable, in a civil point of view, to Deism, or Atheism.

Even in its most degraded forms, Christianity superadds something to the moral restraints of men; and impresses in some degree the doctrine of future retribution. So far as this goes, it is an advantage to the community. But so far as the vital, evangelical spirit of Christianity is rejected, or contemned, just so far the prospect that religion will have a benign influence on society is obscured. If a denial of the divinity and atonement of the Savior, *be denying the Lord that bought us*, then, whatever character a man who does this may sustain among his fellow creatures, in the sight of God he is an unbeliever; and whatever may be the *degree* of his guilt and punishment, he is as *surely* exposed to final destruction, as the Atheist, or the Deist.

It has always appeared to us, that the divinity and atonement of the Savior are essential doctrines in the Christian System; not as subjects of speculation only, but as practical truths. Such being the fact we cannot help believing, that those, who reject and condemn these doctrines, have not a fair claim to be considered as standing on Christian ground. It is a sorrowful thing to be compelled to say, that there are now many persons, in the capital of New England, and not a few in its vicinity, who utterly reject the doctrines in question, and many others, essentially, if not equally, important. The Pamphlet before us offers evidence on this subject, which it is impossible to mistake.

Had the facts, which this pamphlet discloses, been stated on the authority of an orthodox

man, we should doubtless have been met at the threshold, with the allegation of "party spirit and misrepresentation." No orthodox man could ever have hoped for such materials to compile a history as are here presented. The writer has not gathered his information from a hasty survey of the exterior of the temple, which he describes; he has had access, as high priest of his order, to the very interior recesses, and has exposed to view the most secret transactions of those, who are initiated into the worship which he approves. He has shewn us, that like the Grecian philosophers of old, many of his order, in our country, would have one religion for the vulgar, and another for the wise; that it is a fundamental maxim among the great body of leading Unitarians here, not to expose their sentiments directly to the inspection of the world at large, and to challenge investigation, but to operate in secret; to entrust only the initiated with their measures; and to leave the vulgar to fall into the tracks of the wise, by the force of that principle of imitation which is capable of operating so powerfully upon them.

Our own convictions respecting the nature of Unitarianism in Massachusetts, and the manner in which the cause is promoted, are not altered by the pamphlet before us. Living in the centre of action, we have long had these convictions. The Monthly Anthology; the mangled Christian Monitor; the Hymns and Psalms of Mr. Buckminster and Mr. Emerson; the reply of Belsham to Wilberforce and to Dr. J. P. Smith; the Im-

proved Version of the New Testament; all published in Boston; and especially the General Repository, published at Cambridge, by some of the Officers of Harvard College, afford sufficient evidence, without detailing other circumstances, of a settled and persevering determination to prostrate orthodoxy, and to substitute Unitarianism in its place. But the evidence now before us is in some respects more important than any which has preceded it; as it is comprised within a small compass, is easily obtained, and is supported by the names of some of the principal parties concerned.

The Society which claims the honor of taking the lead, in the great work of reformation in our country, is, according to our historian, that which meets at the Stone Chapel in Boston; and Dr. Freeman, it seems, claims to be considered as at the bottom of all the revolutions, which have taken place there. So early as the year 1786, Dr. Freeman had persuaded his church to adopt a Liturgy, which the Rev. J. Smith, in a letter to Mr. Lindsey, describes as "perfectly Unitarian," (p. 11.) Dr. Freeman, however, in a letter, dated the same year, tells Mr. Lindsey, that "some defects and improprieties are still retained, for the sake of inducing them, (his congregation,) to omit the most exceptionable parts of the old service, the Athanasian prayers." (p. 12.) In 1811, however, a new edition of his Liturgy was published by Dr. Freeman, which, "with a very few alterations chiefly verbal, might be made," says Mr. Belsham, "perfectly unexceptionable." p. 12.

Dr. Freeman, it seems, was unable, on account of his heretical sentiments, to obtain Episcopal ordination. This misfortune was obviated, however, by his congregation, who, it should be remembered, still professed to be Episcopalians. They ordained him themselves, on Sunday the 18th of Nov. 1787.

Shortly after, a circumstance happened, which as Dr. F. declares in a letter to Mr. Lindsey, tended very much to satisfy the minds of his people, respecting the manner of his ordination.

"I mentioned in a former letter, that Bishop Seabury had ordained a priest in Boston. The members of my congregation in general attended. They were so shocked with the service, particularly with that part where the bishop pretends to communicate the Holy Ghost and the power of forgiving sins which he accompanied with the action of breathing on the candidate, that they now congratulate me upon having escaped what they consider as little short of blasphemy: Few of them had ever read, or at least attentively considered, the Ordination service. Since they have heard it, I have frequently been seriously asked by them, whether I would have submitted to so absurd a form. I confess that I am convinced I should have acted wrong if I had done it. I shudder when I reflect to what moral danger I exposed myself in soliciting ordination of the American bishops, for I certainly never believed that they had the power of conveying the Holy Spirit." pp. 14, 15.

Thus much for the history of Unitarianism at the Stone Chapel. This congregation is afterwards described in the pamphlet, as being the only one of *professed* Unitarians in New England. We must say, that the conduct of this Society and of their minister, in coming out openly, and avowing their sentiments to the world, is vastly preferable to a hypocritical concealment of them. Had other societies followed their example, we should

long since have known with whom we were contending; and not have been obliged to guard against ambushes, instead of combating in the open field.

From Dr. Freeman, so open and ingenuous in the profession of his sentiments, much of the information in our historical pamphlet is derived, as to the progress of Unitarianism in America. This father and apostle of the sect in question, in this country, seems to be more deeply interested, and better informed on the subject, than any other man, who appears in Mr. Belsham's pages. From him we learn, that in 1789, in consequence of the labors of Mr. Hazlitt among the Boston clergy, there were already "many churches in which the worship was strictly Unitarian." p. 12.

Note.

The method in which Dr. F. and others labor to propagate Unitarianism is thus graphically delineated, in a letter to Mr. Lindsey, written as it would seem, in 1796, or 1797.

"I consider it," says this intelligent correspondent to his venerable friend, "as one of the most happy effects which have resulted from my feeble exertions in the Unitarian cause, that they have introduced me to the knowledge and friendship of some of the most valuable characters of the present age; men of enlightened heads, of pious and benevolent hearts; *quibuscum vivere amem, quibuscum obire lebens.*"

"Though it is a standing article of most of our social libraries, that nothing of a controversial nature should be purchased, yet any book which is presented is freely accepted. I have found means, therefore, of introducing into them some of the Unitarian Tracts with which you have kindly furnished me. There are few persons who have not read them with avidity; and when read, they cannot fail to make an impression upon the minds of many. From these and other causes, the Unitarian doctrine appears to

be still upon the increase. I am acquainted with a number of ministers, particularly in the southern part of this state, who avow and publicly preach this sentiment. There are others more cautious, who content themselves with leading their hearers, by a course of rational but prudent sermons, gradually and insensibly to embrace it. Though this latter mode is not what I entirely approve, yet it produces good effects. For the people are thus kept out of the reach of false opinions, and are prepared for the impressions which will be made on them by more bold and ardent successors, who will probably be raised up when these timid characters are removed off the stage. In the eastern part of this State, or what is called the District of Maine, the Unitarian doctrine also makes progress, as I have just been informed by a worthy and judicious minister from that quarter. The Clergy are generally the first who begin to speculate: but the people soon follow, where they are so much accustomed to read and inquire.

"In the accounts which I give you of the state of religious opinions in this country, I always endeavor not to exaggerate, sensible that every zealous man (and I confess that I am zealous) is naturally disposed to rate his own party as highly as he can. It is possible that Unitarianism may be losing ground in one quarter while it is gaining it in another, and that I may not perceive or may not attend to the former. Indeed, I confess and lament that the opinion is scarcely known in the largest part of this vast Republic. It flourishes chiefly in New England; but not much in Connecticut, Rhode Island, New Hampshire, and the western counties of Massachusetts. A few seeds have been sown in Vermont, and an abundant harvest has been produced in the vicinity of Boston and the counties directly south of it. In Pennsylvania, much may be expected from the labors of Dr. Priestley." pp. 22, 23.

How far the sentiments in question have spread in Boston, has been often a subject of inquiry, and not unfrequently of debate. Mr. Belsham will inform us. "If," says he, "I am not greatly misinformed, divine worship in many of the *principal churches at Boston*, is carried on upon principles strictly, if not avowedly, Unitarian." p. 38.

If any thing be lacking in Mr. Belsham's account, it is suppli-

ed in a letter to him by William Wells, Esq. of Boston, a gentleman, who, from his extensive acquaintance with books and men, and his distinguished zeal in the cause of Unitarianism, may well be supposed to give us as exact a picture, as any man living could draw. We print the whole letter, as we shall have occasion to refer to it on various subjects.

"LETTER

From William Wells, Esq. of Boston, in New England, to the Author.
Boston, March 21, 1812.

"My dear Sir,

I AM glad to hear you received the Sermons safe. About six weeks ago I forwarded to Mr. Freme a parcel for you, containing the first No. of "The General Repository and Review." For this you are indebted to Mr. B. I think a letter from him accompanied the Review, but am not sure, as I took no memorandum of the contents of the parcel. A second number will shortly appear, which shall be forwarded by the earliest opportunity. I believe I mentioned in my last the name of the Editor, Mr. Norton an excellent young man. Of his abilities you will be able to judge. I think the first article, and the Review of the Horsleian and Priestleian controversy display a soundness of judgment which at his age is rare. A number of young men who have taken their bachelor's degree now reside at Cambridge as theological students. Several of them are the sons of men of fortune; some, as far as I can judge, of superior talents; and all are pursuing their professional studies with a zeal which is well directed by the very worthy and learned Dr. Ware, professor of divinity, and Dr. Kirkland the president, and an honesty which is entirely unfettered and unbiassed by any system whatever. We have to contend here, as you in England, for the first principles of protestantism, but I see no reason to fear that the ensuing generation will be destitute of able champions for the right of private judgment.

"With regard to the progress of Unitarianism, I have but little to say. Its tenets have spread very extensively in New England, but I believe there is only one Church *professedly* Unitarian. The Churches at Portland and Saco, of which you speak, hardly ever saw the light, and exist no longer. The Mr. Thatcher, who was formerly a Member of Congress, and the Judge T. whom Mr. Merrick men-

tions, are the same. He is one of the Judges of our Supreme Court, an excellent man and most zealous Unitarian. He is now on the circuit in this town, and tells me he is obliged on Sunday to stay at home, or to hear a Calvinist Minister. He is no relation to our friend.

"Most of our Boston Clergy and respectable layman (of whom we have many enlightened theologians) are Unitarian. Nor do they think it at all necessary to conceal their sentiments upon these subjects, but express them without the least hesitation when they judge it proper. I may safely say, the general habit of thinking and speaking upon this question in Boston, is Unitarian. At the same time the controversy is seldom or never introduced into the pulpit. I except the Chapel Church. If publications make their appearance attacking Unitarian sentiments, they are commonly answered with spirit and ability; but the majority of those who are Unitarian are perhaps of these sentiments without any distinct consciousness of being so. Like the first Christians, finding no sentiments but those in the N. T. and not accustomed to hear the language of the N. T. strained and warped by theological system-makers, they adopt naturally a just mode of thinking. This state of things appears to me so favorable to the dissemination of correct sentiments, that I should perhaps regret a great degree of excitement in the public mind upon these subjects. The majority would eventually be against us. The ignorant, the violent, the ambitious and the cunning, would carry the multitude with them in religion as they do in politics. One Dr. M. in a contest for spreading his own sentiments among the *great body* of the people, would at least, for a time, beat ten Priestleys. Not to dwell upon the consideration, that Unitarianism consists rather in *not* believing; and that it is more easy to gain proselytes to absurd opinions, than to make them zealous in *refusing* to believe. With what arms, when the *οι πολλοι* are the judges, can virtue and learning and honor contend with craft and cunning and equivocation and falsehood and intolerant zeal? Learning is worse than useless, virtue is often diffident of her own conclusions, and, at any rate, more anxious to render men good Christians, than to make them Christians of her own denomination; and that self-respect, which is the companion of virtue, disdains to meet the low cunning of her adversaries, or to flatter the low prejudices of her judges. I think then it must be assumed as an axiom, that a persevering controversy upon this question, would render the multitude bigoted and persecuting Calvinists. Then come

systems and catechisms in abundance. Every conceited deacon, every parishioner who has, or thinks he has, a smattering in theology, becomes the inquisitor of his pastor. In such circumstances learning and good sense have no chance. They cannot be heard.

"The violent party here have chosen to meet their opponents upon very unfavorable ground. Instead of making it a cause of orthodoxy against heresy, they have very unwisely preferred to insist upon a subscription to articles of faith. This has given great offence to many who are disposed to be in favor of their creed, and thrown them into the opposite scale. Dr. Osgood is really orthodox in sentiment, but a noble and determined supporter of the right of private judgment, and on the best possible terms with our Boston friends. This is also the case with the venerable Dr. Lathrop of West-Springfield, Mr. Palmer's friend, and many others. In short we are now contending for the liberty of being Protestants. If we can persuade the people (and we stand upon advantageous ground) that we have the right to think upon religious subjects as our consciences and the Scriptures direct, things will go on well. Learning, good sense, and virtue, will then produce their natural effects, and just modes of thinking upon subjects of this nature, as upon all others, will necessarily prevail.

"Will you, my dear Sir, excuse unintentional prolixity? I do not know that you will approve my sentiments, nor am I very confident of their justness; but I have seen the contest between truth and falsehood, *before the multitude*; between every thing which is respectable and every thing which is detestable, so unequal in politics, that I dread the event in matters of religion. Still I would be no advocate for timidity, much less for any thing like equivocation, or evasion; and it must be confessed that prudence often degenerates into these vices. I am, dear Sir, with the greatest esteem, yours affectionately,

W. WELLS, Jur. pp. 43—46.

Such is the testimony in the case under consideration; and we presume that no man, in his senses, will hesitate for a moment to give implicit credit to such witnesses. We shall feel ourselves warranted hereafter, to speak of the fact as certain, that Unitarianism is the predominant religion among the ministers and churches of Boston.

In the District of Maine, Mr. Belsham states, from his correspondent Dr. Freeman, that high hopes were entertained of the spread of Unitarian principles. Churches were established in Portland by the labors of the Rev. Mr. Oxnard, and in Saco by the zeal of Mr. (now judge) Thatcher. These hopes, however, were premature, as it appears by the letter of Mr. Wells.

New York and Philadelphia were also considered by Dr. Priestley, when he first came to this country, as affording great promises of an abundant harvest. Thus he writes to Mr. Lindsey.

"New York, June 15, 1794.

—With respect to myself the difference is great indeed. In England I was an object of the greatest aversion to every person connected with government; whereas here they are those who show me the most respect. With you the Episcopal Church is above every thing. In this city it makes a decent figure, but the Presbyterians are much above them, and the Governor (Clinton,) who is particularly attentive to me, goes to the meeting-house.

"But the preachers, though all civil to me, look upon me with dread, and none of them has asked me to preach in their pulpits. This however does them no good. Several persons express a wish to hear me, and are ashamed of the illiberality of the preachers, and some are avowed Unitarians, so that I am fully persuaded an Unitarian minister, of prudence and good sense, might do very well here. If I were here a Sunday or two more I would make a beginning, and I intend to return for this purpose. The greatest difficulty arises from the indifference of liberal-minded men as to religion in general; they are so much occupied with commerce and politics. One man of proper spirit would be sufficient to establish a solid Unitarian interest; and I am persuaded it will soon be done. As I am much attended to, and my writings, which are in a manner unknown here, begin to be inquired after, I will get my small pamphlets immediately printed here; and wherever I can get an invitation to preach I will go. With this view I shall carefully avoid all the party politics of the country, and have no other

object besides religion and philosophy. Philadelphia will be a more favorable situation than this, and there I shall make a beginning. It will be better, however, to wait a little time, and not show much zeal at the first; and as my coming here is much talked of, I shall reprint my *Fast and Farewell Sermons*.

"I have written to Mr. Belsham, whom I hope, some time or other, to draw hither. He will tell you my scheme. But as I am soon going to Philadelphia, I shall soon know more on the subject.

"I was never more mortified than I now am at not having with me any of my small tracts in defence of the divine unity, as my being here leads many persons to wish to read what I have written on the subject.—I shall reprint them, and I flatter myself they will produce a considerable effect. Indeed my coming hither promises to be of much more service to our cause than I had imagined. But time is necessary, and I am apt to be too precipitate. I want your cool judgment. You waited patiently a long time in London; but what an abundant harvest have you had there. J. PRIESTLEY." pp. 47, 48.

How well these ardent expectations were fulfilled Mr. Belsham informs us.

"Dr. Priestley's personal ministry in the United States was attended with very little apparent success. In Northumberland, where he resided, he collected but few proselytes; and in Philadelphia, where the chapel in which he preached was at first crowded with the principal characters in the United States, he was afterwards for some reason or other almost deserted. Yet here his labors were not wholly ineffectual. Since Dr. Priestley's decease a small, but highly respectable congregation, has been formed, in which, till a regular minister can be procured, a few of the most intelligent and best informed members conduct the service by turns; and the society, upon the whole, is increasing, though some, who once professed zeal in the cause, have turned their backs upon it. The Unitarians in Philadelphia are now erecting a chapel for religious worship, to which many of different persuasions have contributed liberally." pp. 23, 24.

In Connecticut, that land of steady habits, Unitarianism has had poor success. Two ministers, the Rev. J. Sherman, and the Rev. A. Abbot, who endeav-

ored to make disciples there to the sect in question, were both obliged to separate from their charges. Mr. Belsham has introduced a long account of the persecution, (as he is pleased to consider it) of these two "worthy confessors." We shall not enter upon the examination of these cases at present. We refer our readers for the examination of Mr. A.'s case to the *Panoplist* for August, 1812, p. 118, where they will find an ample review of it. Mr. Sherman's case is quite as unfortunate for Mr. B.'s cause. Mr. S. was dismissed, not by a Consociation, or an *ex-parte* council; but by a *Mutual Council*; by men whom he himself considered as favoring his cause. On some of the reflections which Mr. B. makes, with regard to his dismissal, we shall have occasion again to touch. We shall dismiss the case at present, with advising Mr. B., before he bestows the honors of martyrdom again, to wait until the martyr has had time to evince the stability of his profession.

Of Mr. S. we are altogether disposed to speak with tenderness. We have always greatly lamented his fall. He was an amiable man, and possessed respectable talents. But we believe that Unitarians themselves are not much gratified with his present standing.

Nothing but the merest spirit of party could ever have laid hold of the cases of Mr. Abbot and Mr. Sherman, as subjects of complaint. Nothing but a partial, colored, mangled statement of their cases, could be of any avail to the Unitarian cause. After all the means, which are before the public, of becoming

acquainted with the merits of these cases, we think it to be unnecessary to dwell any longer upon the subject.

Mr. Belsham informs us, that a Unitarian congregation has been formed at Oldenbarneveld, in the State of New York. Mr. Sherman was their first minister. He was, however, dismissed before long; and the congregation was fast dwindling away, when Mr. Belsham's book was written.

Mr. B. wrote too early to communicate some other curious information, on the subject of Unitarianism in the western part of the State of New York. We will supply the defect. Within two years, two Unitarian ministers, unable to procure ordination from the clergy in that vicinity, have been ordained by some of the ministers of Boston, and others in its vicinity, over Oldenbarneveld, and Canandaigua.

One of these ordinations took place lately in Boston; the other a year or two since in the neighborhood. This is rather a new practice in our country; but it has some recommendations. It saves much expense and time. A few years since, it was customary for Unitarian candidates, who were desirous of obtaining a settlement without exposing themselves to the scrutiny of orthodox clergymen, to send from distant places to Boston and the vicinity for an ordaining council. All this was attended with trouble, and was, besides, calculated to excite inquiry and distrust. But now, if a Unitarian candidate wishes to be ordained, whether he thinks it proper to avow his sentiments or not, he

can take a journey to Boston, where an ordaining council can be found without the least inconvenience. If some members of the congregation, not understanding the reason of so novel a proceeding, should require an explanation, it will be easy to say, that there is no place in the world, where so venerable, and wise, and learned, and liberal a council can be formed as in Boston. Our readers may be surprised at the measure here described: but we have long since ceased to be surprised at any measure, which could propagate the principles in question.

We must now come to a subject on which we should not touch without mature consideration. We mean the propagation of Unitarianism in Harvard College. We are fully sensible of the delicacy of the subject. That this noble institution has laid fast hold of the affections of the community, is a subject of congratulation rather than of wonder. It has been, in many points of view, the pride and glory of our western world. Its excellent founders and subsequent benefactors have endowed it in a manner unparalleled in this country; and it has been the nursery of a long and illustrious train of religious, civil, and literary characters, whose names will not be forgotten, while the history of the United States shall continue to attract the notice of mankind. Its literary character we are far from wishing to disparage, or undervalue. Its instructors are a highly respectable body of men. Among them are some, as we would hope and believe, who prefer the faith of our fathers to

the new philosophy of the day. Whatever we may think of the religious opinions of others, we are not in the slightest degree tempted to detract from any just estimation, in which they ought to be held, as men of talents and literature. If talents are perverted, or erudition misapplied, in the zealous propagation of the new philosophical religion, we must of course lament such a state of things; but this will neither warrant nor prompt us to treat the persons concerned with disrespect.

We are aware of the artifice, which has been resorted to by some distinguished names, to save this Seminary from animadversion. The moment we begin to express our fears respecting the tendency of its administration, they vociferate, "Why then you are enemies to learning! You want to pull down the college; to check the spirit of improvement and inquiry; and to bring us back to the dark ages!" This will do very well as a hasty appeal to the vulgar; but if it be intended as a specimen of the new philosophical reasoning, it is, we should suppose, not quite so happy as could be wished by its authors.

What! Are we enemies to learning, because we are convinced that learning misapplied and perverted may do great harm to the community? And because we are earnestly desirous, that this noble Institution, sacredly consecrated "to Christ and the Church," should regard its original destination, and not teach men to *deny the Lord of glory*, instead of worshipping him? Are we enemies to Harvard University, because we ar-

dently wish that the majority of its instructors had such views of Christianity as appear to us evangelical, instead of other views, which they now entertain and inculcate? The allegation is as contemptible as it is erroneous, and can never weigh a feather, but with persons, who are guided neither by reasoning nor by principle.

But may we not be mistaken, in our apprehensions respecting the administration of Cambridge College? Would to God we might be convinced of this; but the proof, from the pamphlet before us, is too plain to admit of doubt.

Mr. Belsham has told us what was done at Cambridge, more than 20 years ago, to introduce Unitarianism there.

"As a further means of diffusing the important doctrines of the proper Unity of God, and the simple humanity of Jesus Christ, Mr. Lindsey made a present of his own and of Dr. Priestley's Theological Works to the Library of Harvard College, in the University of Cambridge in New England; for which, "as a very valuable and acceptable present," he received the thanks of the President and Fellows. These books were read with great avidity by the students. But though there is reason to believe that the seed thus sown took deep root, and that in many instances it produced an abundant harvest; and though many persons eminent for rank and talent in the New England States openly avowed the Unitarian creed, it does not appear that any numerous societies of Christians have hitherto followed the example of the congregation at the King's Chapel, in making a public profession of the Unitarian doctrine." pp. 15, 16.

Again;

"In the state of Massachusetts, and particularly in the environs of Boston, the great cause of Christian truth," (i. e. of Unitarianism,) "is making a silent but rapid and irresistible progress. From the inquisitive and liberal spirit which pre-

rails in the University of Cambridge, which has never been checked at any time, but which there is reason to expect will receive every requisite aid and encouragement from the present learned and accomplished Principal, Dr. Kirkland, the happiest consequences may be expected to ensue." p. 37.

We refer also to the first paragraph of the letters of Mr. Wells, a distinguished and favorite alumnus of that college. If further evidence were wanting, we might find it, in the class of books recommended by the Professor of Divinity in that Seminary, as the best books in Theology; in the manner in which his Theological Lectures are managed, and in which the exercises of the Sabbath are conducted; especially, in the General Repository, a work, which declares the doctrine of the Trinity to be the grossest corruption of modern times; and in a letter of consolation and encouragement written by Dr. Kirkland to the New Unitarian Church in Philadelphia; which they, like their Apostle Belsham, have been complaisant enough to publish, by shewing it to several of their orthodox friends. But it is unnecessary to proceed in this detail, which might be enlarged to thousands of particulars. The gentlemen themselves, since Mr. Belsham has so unexpectedly and imprudently betrayed the matter, will not, we presume, for a moment hesitate to avow the principles which they hold.

There is one topic of proof, however, which is of a very solemn nature, and which deserves a separate notice. We refer to the prayers, offered by the President, at the public commencement. It will not be contended,

that these prayers, as they have been offered for four years in succession, afford an unfavorable specimen of the *kind* of religion, which is taught in the college. Indeed, the prayers of professed Christians, generally, are much less apt to be erroneous, than their direct, formal, instructions. At one commencement, that of 1813, the prayers were particularly observed, and their deficiencies noticed, even by children who had been accustomed to far other devotional exercises. At the close of the day, several gentlemen of education and respectability, from different parts of the American union, came to the unanimous conclusion, that the following *negatives* could be truly asserted concerning both the prayers: viz. That there was no mention of *sin*; of course no petition for forgiveness; no admission or implication that mankind are in a ruined state; no acknowledgment of exposedness to sin. There was no mention of *salvation*; nor the slightest allusion to any *church* as existing upon earth; nor to the holiness and happiness of heaven. There was no mention of a radical distinction among men; no admission of regeneration; no supplication for spiritual aid. There was no looking forward to a more blissful period of the world, when the truth shall be universally prevalent. In one of the prayers, there was no mention of Christ, nor the most distant allusion to Him; in the other, the only mention or allusion was in the three closing words, "through our Redeemer."

We should not have mentioned this subject, if it seemed pos-

sible that such prayers could have originated from mere forgetfulness, or accident. Were we asked for a *positive* description of them, we should say, that they were such as a candid and intelligent man would suppose Mr. Belsham to make, in perfect consistency with his creed.

It is to be remembered, that the departure of a class from the college, where they have been educated, is to them a solemn occasion; and that they *need*, whatever their instructors may think on the subject, to be earnestly and affectionately commended to the grace of God. They need the prayers of all, who have an interest at the throne of grace, that as they go forth into the world, and become more exposed to its manifold temptations, they may be preserved from sin, and sanctified by the Word and Spirit of God, made blessings to the church and the world, and prepared for endless happiness and glory.

Such, then, is the melancholy view of this important Seminary; which contains hundreds of promising youths, who are hereafter to act a conspicuous part in the important business of life. The most superficial observer must see, that such a seminary is the very heart of the commonwealth; every pulse it beats, if it be diseased, will send poisonous blood to the very extremities of the body politic. Let Christian parents look well to this. The men that raised up the College, and made it the glory of our western world, were men who consecrated it "*to Christ and the church.*" To them belongs the praise of making it what it has been. But it is no longer what

it once was. The lustre of science still shines, but the Sun of Christianity is eclipsed. Young men leave the place now, not with hosannas in their mouths to the Son of David; but with burning zeal to propagate the new philosophy. Does the parent, who bows the knee to Jesus, wish to have his son *deny the Lord that bought him?* If not, let him well reflect what destination he gives him, to be taught the principles of religion as well as science.

If the advocates for the present administration of the College are displeased with these remarks, they must thank Mr. Belsham for having elicited them. We never took our pen with greater caution, nor with a more imperious sense of duty.

We have done with the History of the progress of Unitarianism; but there are some incidental points in the pamphlet before us, which it will be proper to notice.

The *manner*, in which Unitarianism is propagated, deserves a few moments attention. Dr. Freeman, as has been seen already, describes certain cautious characters, "*who content themselves with leading their hearers, by a course of rational but prudent sermons, gradually and insensibly to embrace*" Unitarianism. Though Dr. F. does not entirely approve this mode; "*yet,*" says he, "*it produces good effects.*"

Mr. Belsham has inserted in his work, (pp. 38—41 of the pamphlet,) a very "curious" letter, to use his own epithet; but has not told us who was the writer of it. We recommend this letter to our readers, as one

of the most admirable specimens of anility, which they will any where find. It contains a great deal of small talk, concerning the Boston Clergy and other things. The object of Mr. Belsham in publishing it, was, doubtless, to chastise the Boston clergy for their cowardice in concealing their religious opinions. Hear him commenting on this letter:

"Can it upon the common principles of human nature be reasonably expected of a body of clergy, nursed in the lap of ease and affluence, and placed in a station of such high secular consideration and comfort as that of the ministers of Boston, that they should come forward and by an open profession of unpopular truth voluntarily risk the loss of all their temporal dignity and comfort, and incur the contempt and enmity of many who are now their warmest admirers and friends? I say not this by way of disparagement to the present body of ministers in Boston and its neighborhood. Some of these I have the pleasure to call my friends, and know them to be possessed of talents the most distinguished, of piety the most fervent, and of benevolence and zeal the most ardent, active and laudable; and of the rest I have heard a most favorable character. It is the situation, not the men, which excites my apprehensions. And who will venture to say of himself, that his virtue would be equal to the trial. Yet still it cannot reasonably be hoped that truth will make any visible and rapid progress, till her advocates rise above the fear of man, and the love of ease, and are willing with the apostles of Christ and the reformers of every age, to forsake all and to sacrifice their dearest interests in her glorious cause. The encouragement and success which such faithful confessors would meet with in that populous and opulent city, would, I doubt not, be very great." p. 41.

"Faithful confessors!" What distinguished self-denial, simplicity, and godly sincerity! The crown of martyrdom surely awaits you. Are you not impatient to be gone, and grasp the immortal prize?

Mr. Belsham takes the liberty to differ very much from his

Boston brethren, on the subject of concealing their sentiments in this manner. Mr. Wells has undertaken to become their advocate. His plea in their behalf has been already seen in the third paragraph of his letter.

We pass over, for the present, the very decorous appellations, liberally bestowed by Mr. Wells upon the orthodox; and remark merely, that the apology for his cautious brethren sufficiently indicates his views of their conduct in regard to their public teaching.

Thus it is, and thus it has been for years. Knowing that the cold skepticism of Socinianism cannot satisfy the wants nor alleviate the woes of plain common sense people, its advocates in general have not dared to be open. They have clandestinely crept into orthodox churches, by forbearing to contradict their faith, and then have gradually moulded them by their *negative* preaching, to the shape which they would wish. The people, after a while, never hearing of the atonement, nor of special grace, or any of the kindred doctrines, forget that they belong to the Christian system; and, by and by, regard a man as a kind of enthusiast, or monster, who preaches such doctrines. Who does not see, that there is great cunning, and that there is great policy in all this? But then—the honesty! That is another matter. Did the holy apostles act in this manner when they preached to Jews or heathens? Did *they* teach by *negatives*? Let those blush, who profess to follow the apostles, and yet behave in this base, hypocritical manner! Common honesty revolts at it. The idea that a minister believes

the truths of the Gospel to be of infinite importance, and still conceals them, is incompatible either with fidelity or integrity.

We appeal to the community at large, whether it is not a notorious fact, that candidates for the ministry, of the liberal party, generally conceal their religious opinions; and that they do this with particular care, when there is a prospect, or a hope, of their being settled over orthodox churches? We ask, also, whether it is not a notorious fact, that candidates of the orthodox school generally avow their religious opinions with the utmost frankness, and that they take particular care to do so, when there is a prospect of their being settled over churches and congregations, which are supposed to have a leaning towards modern liberality? A child can draw the inference; especially when informed, that inducements of a worldly nature would often be quite as great in the latter class of cases as in the former.

We know indeed, that *modesty* is the plea of these *negative* preachers! They do not wish to be over-confident! But let us see them undisguised; look at them in Mr. Belsham's pamphlet; and judge of this modesty and want of confidence in their own opinions.

"Unitarianism," says Mr. Wells, "consists rather in *not* believing." Yes, in *not* believing the doctrines of the Gospel; but not in having no creed. Some Unitarians are, indeed of this sort. They are universal skeptics, respecting every proposition that relates to Christianity. But most have a creed. What that is, we have seen from the

hand of the ingenuous Mr. Belsham; who, whatever other faults he has, is certainly not often chargeable with the faults of tergiversation and duplicity.

Of the manner in which Unitarianism is taught in Harvard College, Mr. Wells has given us a description in the first paragraph of his letter, to which the reader will please to refer. This accords, to be sure, very well with the accounts which we have often received, of the manner of instruction in divinity, at present, in that University. *System* in instruction, as a positive entity, is indeed sufficiently remote from the "direction" of the Instructors; but that religion, "which consists in *not* believing," is taught by a well concerted and uniformly executed plan of negatives. All systems but Unitarianism are openly, or secretly, impugned or ridiculed, while the "*not* believing" religion is dexterously substituted in their place.

We unite most heartily with Mr. Belsham, on the subject of propagating Unitarianism, in the 'wish to see all who are truly Unitarians openly such,' and that they would teach the doctrines of their creed, "as well as practise the rites of Unitarian worship." p. 41.

Let every honest man look at the above picture of Unitarianism, drawn by the leaders themselves. Hear Mr. Wells once more, on the spread of these principles. "Its tenets," (those of Unitarianism,) "have spread *very extensively* in New England, but I believe there is *only one* church *professedly* Unitarian." p. 44. Indeed! And are these the true representatives

of the Apostles and martyrs, glorifying God by an *open profession* of his Gospel, and not ashamed to own their Lord before men? Is this *the simplicity and godly sincerity* of the Gospel? And these the men, who claim all the reason, all the learning, all the charity, all the *integrity* of the community? Are these the men, who, according to the insinuation of Mr. Wells, are "every thing that is respectable," while their opponents are "every thing that is detestable?" The conduct of Mr. Belsham, rotten as he is, in point of doctrine, to the very core, is purity itself compared with the conduct of these.

There is another striking characteristic in the progress of Unitarianism in this country. We have, in various places, the history of the manner in which converts are made to this religion. The Boston clergy are represented by Dr. Freeman, as first converted by the labors of Mr. Hazlitt. The Rev. Mr. Oxnard, the father of the Unitarians at Portland, was "convinced by the works of Dr. Priestley and Mr. Lindsey." p. 16. "The publications of these men," says Dr. F. "have had, and probably will have, great effects." p. 17. By the same publications, was the Rev. J. Sherman convinced. p. 24. The works of other Unitarians make converts also at Oldenbarneveld, and other places. Dr. Priestley, in his letter already extracted, seems to consider his Tracts as necessary to his success.

All this, to be sure, is just what the orthodox have long affirmed; Unitarianism is not spread by the *Bible*. But then,

that the sect, which has such a loathing for all *systems*, and all human creeds, and compositions, should depend, and acknowledge its dependence, for all its success, on the works of Priestley, Lindsey, and a few others, is not quite so consistent as one might expect. Yes, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit of God, are not once named in the whole pamphlet, as the causes of conversion to Unitarianism; or as even co-adjutors in this work. The truth frequently owes its disclosure to accident. Mr. Belsham and his correspondents, did not mean to portray Unitarianism thus. But where there was no disguise; in the free expression of their hearts, they told the honest truth. To Priestley, and Lindsey, and their co-adjutors be all the glory of the spread of this sect! The Bible will, we apprehend, be the last to claim it.

There is another characteristic of Unitarians, displayed in this pamphlet, which is not new to us, but with which we have for many years been nauseated. It is the practice of universally bedaubing each other, with all the fulsome adulation which they can collect and invent. Let us see how this matter is managed by Mr. Belsham and his correspondents. We begin with the commencement of the book, and go on in course. The Rev. J. Smith is simply "respectable." Dr. Freeman has "a great deal of knowledge, good sense, and an excellent disposition." Mr. Hazlitt is "pious, zealous, and intelligent,—an honest man—and an honest good man;" all in twelve lines. Dr. Provost, who is represented as favoring Dr. F.

is a "man of great learning, liberal sentiments, and deep piety," as well as a "worthy prelate." Governor Bowdoin, who is also represented as favoring Dr. F. has "learning, good sense and merit." Mr. Carey is "worthy of the honorable situation which he occupies, and is well qualified to carry on the cause in which his *excellent* colleague is engaged." Mr. Oxnard is a "man of good talents, sincere piety, and of ardent zeal," a "worthy founder," and a "worthy man;" all in twelve lines. Gen. Lincoln is our "worthy Lieutenant Governor." Mr. Thatcher is a "gentleman of large property, and of excellent character; of active zeal, of high character, approved patriotism and distinguished talents." Mr. Bentley, (the Rev. Mr. Bentley of Salem) is a "man of a bold, independent mind, of strong natural powers, and of more skill in the learned languages than any person of his years in the state." Col. Mappa is a "gentleman of truly respectable character, and of considerable property." Mr. Vanderkemp is "learned and pious—and excellent and worthy." Mr. Sherman is a "worthy confessor,—a Christian confessor;" possesses "fortitude and zeal," with a "high elevation of character." Mr. Abbot is the "faithful champion of truth, the amiable, useful, and beloved pastor; the virtuous sufferer; an able, honest, and pious sufferer;" all within half a page. Mr. Wells is "intelligent, learned, and valuable," and has a "zeal for the truth which is beyond all praise." Mr. Norton is an "excellent young man." Dr. Ware is "worthy and learned;" and Mr. Buck-

minster is "reverend, and learned, and eloquent."

All this, and much more of the same kind, in about 30 pages. Truly praise must be plenty enough, when it rains down thus in showers. We wonder what new Lexicon of epithets Mr. Belsham and his correspondents have been studying. It must surely be a worthy book, by a worthy author, printed by a worthy printer, at a worthy press; besides being bound in a worthy manner by a worthy binder, and sold by a worthy bookseller, at a worthy price, to a worthy man, who has made a worthy use of it, in the composition of this *worthy* history.

But to be serious; it is nauseating, it is intolerable, to find such daubing on every page. Let a man only turn Unitarian, and he becomes at once a man of talents, and consideration. The newspapers puff his performances. He is flattered while he lives; and canonized when he is dead. Boston is, we believe, the only place in this country, where the manner in which duties are discharged in the pulpit, are made the perpetual subject of newspaper eulogy. The Editors of papers are not at the bottom of this. It lies in the taste of the Unitarian public. Cambridge is the only University which praises herself, and assumes a place above all her sister colleges. We are satisfied that Unitarianism has done this. It is one of the arts of proselyting. Mr. Belsham has shewn us how he can play off his actors in the drama. The disciples follow the example of their master. But it is high time to have done praising themselves; or at least

to be sensible of the awkward, disgusting manner, in which they discharge this essential part of their vocation.

All this, however, we may be told, proceeds from breasts overflowing with the milk of human kindness; from a fountain which sends forth ebullitions of universal philanthropy. Indeed! Let us look a little farther before we draw this conclusion. How do these *worthy*, and *pious*, and *candid*, and *liberal* gentlemen treat their opponents? Take the following specimens of liberality; and these too from leaders of the sect.

Mr. Belsham calls the opposers of Mr. Sherman, "ignorant and malignant persecutors," p. 26. Mr. Vanderkemp says, that Mr. Sherman has to struggle at Oldenbarneveld, "with furious bigotry and ignorant superstition," p. 35. Mr. Wells, speaking of an open contest about Socinian principles, indulges in the most violent invectives. Dr. Freeman tells Mr. Lindsey, that he is frequently angry "with error and bigotry;" and congratulates him, on his having "reclaimed many from the errors of idolatry and superstition."

Such are the undisguised expressions of these *kind* and *liberal* gentlemen toward the orthodox. All comment is superfluous. In pretence, all is politeness and liberality; in practice, we find a rancor bitter as death, and cruel as the grave.

Dr. Freeman has indeed gone to the *ne plus* of his sect. The orthodox are "*idolaters*"! Divine Savior! What, then, are those *ten thousand times ten thousand*, and *thousands of thousands*, around the throne of God, who

say with a loud voice, *Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor and glory and blessing*, and who *rest not day nor night* from this employment?

It is more than three years, since we resolved to take up, as a distinct article, the systematic practice of praising each other, which has been adopted by the narrow circle of leading Unitarians in this country. This practice we verily believe to have been carried to an extent absolutely unexampled. It has been so long continued, as to have become a proverb, and a by-word, in every part of the United States. Other pressing subjects have hitherto prevented us from accomplishing our intention. But from the complete success which attended a hasty glance at this subject, in a pamphlet on the controversy between Miss Adams and Dr. Morse, we are sorry that it has not long ago been examined and exposed.

But it is time to bring our Review to a close. We will touch on one or two subjects more, and we shall have done for the present.

We introduce the first subject, by extracting from Mr. Belsham the following passage.

"Notwithstanding however these strong facts, this noble profession, and this conciliatory spirit, the *prudent* Council proceed, as a matter of expediency, to dismiss Mr. Sherman from his connexion with the society: and while they bear honorable testimony to his character and talents, and "recommend him to the kind reception of those who may see fit to employ him," they cautiously subjoin, that they "do not consider themselves as giving their approbation of Mr. Sherman's *peculiar phraseology* or *circumstantial difference* of sentiment on the subject of the Trinity." And in their subsequent

advice to Mr. Sherman, they admonish him to guard against a bold spirit of speculation, and an inordinate love of novelty.

"It is not a little curious to contrast those differences of opinion which this venerable Council coolly describes under the soft expressions of *peculiar phraseology* and a *circumstantial difference* of sentiment. The man whom they gravely caution against a bold spirit of speculation and inordinate love of novelty, asserts the doctrine, that there is One God, the sole object of religious worship, and one Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus, who is the prophet and messenger of God. While his orthodox opponents, to accommodate whom the Council think it expedient to dismiss their exemplary pastor, maintain as a doctrine essential to salvation, and which they "can never give up but with the Bible which contains it," that "the man Jesus is truly and properly God." Is the venerable Council serious in stating differences so glaring and so substantial as these, as nothing more than a "peculiar phraseology" and a "circumstantial difference of sentiment"? No! No! Opinions such as these can no more harmonize with each other than light and darkness, than Christ and Belial. They who hold doctrines so diametrically opposite cannot be fellow worshippers in the same temple. It was expedient that they should separate. So far the Council judged right." p. 30.

With all our hearts we subscribe to this frank and ingenuous comment. It does honor to Mr. Belsham. How different from the disguise of our Unitarians, and their whining complaints about illiberality in the orthodox in refusing to exchange with them. We repeat with Mr. Belsham, "Those who hold doctrines, so diametrically opposite, cannot be fellow-worshippers in the same temple." *How can two walk together unless they are agreed?* We hope these remarks of Mr. B. will stimulate his brethren here, to adopt his language on this subject; at least, to permit the orthodox to *come out and be separate*, without filling the churches and the newspapers with complaints of bigotry and uncharitableness. We

hope, too, that the orthodox will be stimulated to act more decisively on this subject, than they have done. It is the reproach and sin of Massachusetts, that while all the orthodox, from Connecticut to Georgia, are unanimous in withholding communion from Unitarians, she is lagging behind, and dallying with this awful and responsible subject. It is high time for decisive action on this point. We are aware who stand in the way. There are ministers, who make it their boast to shoot as near to orthodoxy as they can, and not hit it; who are waiting to see which way the tide will finally turn; who will write one half of a sermon to please the orthodox, and the other half to satisfy Unitarians; who mean to be popular with both parties, let the cause of religion fare as it may. For such, it requires the full exercise of Christian meekness not to feel contempt. We do feel sincere commiseration.

There are others, too, who are too *modest* and *unassuming* to preach or act decisively, because forsooth, they are not *satisfied* about certain controverted points. Let such persons abandon the office of teaching, and return to their studies until they *are* satisfied. What right have they to teach religion, when they themselves are not satisfied about its fundamental principles?

Both these parties are clogs to orthodoxy. Their *help* is deadly to the cause. We want none to labor in the work, who are not satisfied that it is the cause of God, and prepared to act accordingly.

Still, we would be the last to justify persecution, or party

spirit. We abhor both. Let the orthodox come out and be separate, as Mr. Belsham advises; but let them utter no reproaches; let them pass no hasty censures, no unchristian excommunications. Let them deal with their offending brethren in a solemn, affectionate, tender manner. Their business is to labor for the salvation of souls, not to exalt a party.

As to the utter incompatibility of Unitarianism with the faith of orthodox churches, we present our readers with the opinion of a very able man, and a distinguished champion of the truth.

"It is very obvious, that two systems, of which the sentiments on subjects such as these are in direct opposition, cannot, with any propriety, be confounded together under one common name. That both should be Christianity, is impossible; else Christianity is a term which distinguishes nothing. Viewing the matter abstractly, and without affirming, for the present, what is truth and what is error, this, I think, I may with confidence affirm, that to call schemes so opposite in all their great leading articles by a common appellation, is more absurd, than it would be to confound together those two irreconcilable theories in astronomy, of which the one places the Earth, and the other the Sun, in the centre of the Planetary System. They are, in truth, *essentially different religions*. For if opposite views as to the *object of worship*, the *ground of hope for eternity*, the *rule of faith and duty*, and the *principles and motives of true obedience*; if these do not constitute different religions, we may, without much difficulty, discover some principles of union and identity, among all religions whatever; we may realize the doctrine of Pope's universal prayer; and extend the right hand of fellowship to the worshippers at the Mosque, and to the votaries of Brama."

These sentences are taken from a work now in the press, and which will be presented to the public in a few days. It is a *Series of Discourses on the Socinian Controversy*, by the Rev. *Ralph Wardlaw*, of Glasgow, and

has been received with very great favor in Great Britain. Mr. Wardlaw probably did not know, that Pope's Universal Prayer had been introduced with an alteration which did not affect the sense, into the public worship of an enlightened congregation, in the most enlightened place in the world. Yes, this prayer, which declares that the same God is worshipped by one, whom the New Testament describes as a *saint* or holy person, by a *sage*, who is laboring to emit the light of philosophy from the darkness of his own benighted mind, and by a *savage*, who is engaged in offering human sacrifices to his malignant deities;—this prayer is adopted by a Christian assembly to be used as a hymn of praise to the true God!

To return to the subject, from which we digressed a moment, let the orthodox separate in worship and communion from Unitarians; but let them meekly give a reason for their separation. To treat their opponents with asperity, with contempt, or reproach, is unworthy of them as Christians, or as men. They must feel, that their opponents have souls to be saved or lost; souls as precious as their own. The great majority of those, whose influence goes to swell the importance of the liberal party, are not involved in most of the censures, which this review implies, or expresses. They, only, who are the principal actors in Mr. Belsham's drama, have been thus unwittingly exposed by their heresiarch. Their conduct deserves animadversion in many things, as it regards religion. In a civil and social respect, we are disposed to treat them with cour-

tesy. But we cannot, we ought not to let this courtesy paralyze our hands and make us indifferent, while the contest is pending, whether Christianity shall exist in any thing more than a name in our country, or be supplanted by the new philosophy.

Let our readers say, after the above developement, whether the time is not come, in which we and they are to speak out, and to act with decision. If it is, then let them follow the example; and let the churches in this land, who yet reverence the religion of the Bible, (which was the religion of our fathers,) and bow the knee to Jesus, purify themselves, wherever it is necessary from the reproach which now lies against some of them.

Have you any doubts remaining on this subject after perusing the quotations contained in this Review? You have seen, Christians, in what manner your Bible and your Savior are regarded and treated. Ponder well on this. Shall your children be trained up in these principles? Remember that you are accountable to God for the manner in which you think and act on these subjects.

We are aware, that it will be charged against us, that the tendency of the preceding remarks is to give an unfair representation of the liberal party. It will be said, that the liberal party ought not to be condemned for the extravagant opinions of Mr. Belsham. It has been said, that Mr. Wells is an obscure man, and that his testimony does not amount to much. This is new to us. We had always supposed that Mr. Wells was far from be-

ing an obscure man among the liberal party; and we still believe that he is one of the most intelligent, active, and prominent men in their ranks. That he has been among the planners and executors of nearly all their literary publications will not be doubted. It is with pleasure that we mention one proof of genuine liberality in Mr. Wells: we refer to his republication of the *Christian Observer*. By presenting this work to the American public, he conferred a lasting benefit on this country; though, by doing it, he incurred the disapprobation of some of his Unitarian brethren. We believe, however, that Mr. Wells is not at present concerned in that publication.

But there is much evidence on this subject, besides the testimony of Mr. Wells and Dr. Freeman. We feel entirely warranted to say, that the *predominant religion* of the liberal party is decidedly Unitarian, in Mr. Belsham's sense of the word. The *Anthology*, published by the most prominent clergymen and laymen of the liberal party, clearly favored the Unitarian school. The *General Repository* was still more open and undisguised. Both these works had the patronage of those, who have the entire control of the College; the latter issuing from the walls of that seminary. The *Improved Version* of the New Testament was patronized and praised by the same men. Of this Version Mr. Belsham says, in his *Calm Inquiry*, p. 460, that 'the notes were intended chiefly to exhibit the most approved interpretations of the Unitarian expositors.' Of this avowedly

sectarian publication the Reviewers in the General Repository speak thus, vol. iv, p. 207.

"We honestly profess, and without fear of losing reputation with those, whose good opinion we are very solicitous to retain, that we think it a work highly respectable, and adapted to be very useful."

Again the Reviewers say, that the editors of the improved Version

"Have produced a version far more faithful, more correct, and more intelligible, than that in common use; a version therefore to an intelligent English reader of very great value."

In the Anthology for May, 1811, p. 336, is a review of the *Memoirs of Dr. Wheelock*. This review was written, as we have reason to believe, by the President of Harvard College. If we have been misinformed, we will take the earliest opportunity of correcting the mistake. In the course of the article, there is much sly sarcasm in reference to the orthodox faith. The following passage we quote as a specimen.

"The early conversion of Mr. Wheelock is by no means the general privilege of the disciples of his school, however exemplary and regular their lives. The change, which they deem saving, is most commonly, in the case of those intended for the ministry, delayed till near the time when they must begin or relinquish their chosen calling. At that period, they often find themselves pursued, as a "murderer by the avenger of blood to the very gates of the city of refuge"—and they must enter or perish. If their reason survives the dismay or despondence of the law-work, the dreadful spasm passes off; and the agitation subsides into a calm, which enables them first to hear the whispers of hope, and then proceed to the exultation of joy. pp. 337, 338.

This passage is written in a style which exactly suits the views and feelings of the Unitarian school.

Could the founders, benefactors, and instructors of Harvard College, for nearly a century and three quarters, have foreseen the day, when the literary publications, patronized by the governors and instructors of that institution, should ridicule the idea of conversion by the agency of the Holy Spirit of God, with what deep and poignant grief would their hearts have been effected! And how great would have been their astonishment, as well as their grief, if informed, that the highest officer, in that venerable seminary, would think it a proper employment of his time to sit down coolly to the composition of a strain of sarcasm and raillery on such a subject:—and that, not for his own amusement only, but to be thrown into the world to furnish new jests for the profane, and increase the natural antipathy of men to religion!

It appears, then, that the College, and nearly all the influence of the liberal party through the medium of the press, are in favor of Unitarianism. If individuals dislike Mr. Belsham as a leader; if they are not willing to be classed among his followers; let them declare their own opinions openly. But let them not yield all their countenance to Unitarians and yet complain if ranked in the same class, by those who have no means of learning their opinions except by their conduct.

The pamphlet contains a curious letter from Mr. Jefferson to Dr. Priestley, which we have not room to describe. Speaking of Mr. Jefferson, Dr. Priestley says: "He is generally considered as an unbeliever: if so, however, HE CANNOT BE FAR FROM US,

and I hope in the way to be not only almost, but altogether what we are." This is what we have always thought, and frequently said. Unitarianism and Infidelity are nearly related indeed. Mr. Wells, who is a hopeful pupil of the Priestleian school, says that they are identical. "Unitarianism," says he, "consists rather in *not* believing," and he wishes to make men "zealous in *refusing* to believe." The words printed in Italics were so printed by Mr. Belsham, and were probably understood by Mr. Wells. On reading this passage, we turned to the Improved Version, saying to ourselves, "Who knows but Mr. Wells may read Scripture thus: *He that believeth not shall be saved.*" We find that this conjectural emendation is probably reserved for some improved edition. Whether it is so reserved or not, it is quite as worthy of credit as several conjectural criticisms contained in that work.

We shall close with a few brief observations on Mr. Wells's letter; a letter which contains, within a small compass, a faithful epitome of the most common cant of the liberal party, as it has appeared in their publications, for ten years past.

It is curious to observe the truly meek and charitable manner, in which Mr. Wells arranges the parties to the Unitarian controversy. On his own side, are "honesty unfettered and unbiassed," "correct sentiments," "virtue and learning and honor," "spirit and ability," "good sense," "self-respect, the companion of virtue," "truth," and, in short, "every thing which is respectable." On the side of the orthodox, are "craft and cunning and equivocation and falsehood and intolerant zeal," "low cunning," "low prejudices," "and every thing which is detestable." So much for abstract qualities. When we come to persons, we find "Mr. Norton, an excellent young man," "the very worthy and learned Dr. Ware," "Dr. Kirkland the president," "most of the Boston clergy and res-

pectable laymen, (many of whom are enlightened theologians,) who do not conceal their sentiments, but express them, *when they judge it proper,*" and "Judge Thatcher, an excellent man and most zealous Unitarian:" these are drawn up in battle-array, in the liberal ranks. On the other side no names are mentioned except that of "Dr. M.)* But we find that the orthodox consist of "theological system-makers;" of "the ignorant, the violent, the ambitious, and the cunning;" of "conceited deacons," and "bigoted, persecuting Calvinists." Really! This is an arrangement which, in point of liberality, has seldom been surpassed. Mr. Wells ought to be appointed grand marshal of the Unitarian corps.

Dr. Osgood and Dr. Lathrop are suffered to stand apart. This favor seems to have been granted them, because, to use the words of Mr. Wells, "they are on the best possible terms with our Boston friends."

Mr. Wells decides without the least hesitation, that Unitarian sentiments are the only sentiments to be found in the New Testament. It is not to our purpose to inquire, whence he derived his authority to dogmatize in this flippant manner. He speak, however, of Drs. Osgood and Lathrop as "really orthodox," and as "noble and determined supporters of the right of private judgment." Yet, if his decision is entitled to credit, these aged and "venerable" clergymen are the mere dupes of "theological system-makers;" and have been employed all their lives in teaching doctrines, which have nothing to support them in the New Testament.

Again; Mr. Wells speaks in the most confident manner as though all the learning in the world was enlisted on the Unitarian side, and had to contend with nothing but ignorance,

* The manner in which Dr. M. is mentioned in this letter, and the influence which he is deemed to have, will account for no small part of the zeal, which some Unitarians have shewn to put him down. "Worthy" conduct in a "worthy" cause.

prejudice and bigotry. Is it possible that Mr. Wells can believe, in reference to this country, that all the learning is on his side, when nearly all the regular clergy, all the colleges except one, and all the theological institutions, are decidedly opposed to Unitarianism? and when he can number, as in favor of his scheme, only one college, and a few clergymen in Boston and the vicinity? Is it possible, that he can believe the crude speculations of such a man as Mr. Belsham to be evidences of great learning, while such men as Middleton, Magee, Buchanan, Wardlaw, Chalmers, and the Editors of the Christian Observer, are poor, ignorant, deluded, bigoted creatures?

Again; Mr. Wells says that "the violent party," (by which term he very meekly characterizes the friends of the religion of our fathers,) "have very unwisely preferred to insist upon a subscription to articles of faith." The simple fact is, that the founders of the Theological Institution at Andover have very wisely insisted, that the *professors supported by their funds* should subscribe articles of faith. Yet a stranger would suppose, from Mr. Wells's representation, that all our ministers and churches were required to subscribe to some authorized formula of religious doctrines, on penalty of being excluded from the communion of the orthodox churches. We need not say, that such a representation is entirely unsupported by fact.

It is indeed singular that men professing unbounded liberality, should raise and keep up a violent outcry, merely because a few charitable individuals have endowed *professorships with their own money*, and have provided that the professors should believe certain doctrines, which, as the founders are fully persuaded, are taught in the Scriptures.

Again; "We have to contend here," says Mr. Wells, "for the first principles of Protestantism."

"In short, we are now contending for the liberty of being Protestants."

Were it not that similar assertions have been often made by many of the liberal party, we should not notice this subject. We must intreat Mr. Wells, and his brethren, to state precisely what those principles of Protestantism are, which are contended for by him and his friends, and denied by the orthodox. Till this is done, we shall take the liberty of asserting, and we do it without the least fear of contradiction or exposure, that *no one fundamental principle of Protestantism* is thus contended for and thus denied. Let us look a moment at a subject, which has given rise to so much groundless clamor. What are the first principles of Protestantism? We have always supposed, *that justification by faith alone*, was, by way of eminence, the first principle of the early reformers. Another important principle was this; that before regeneration men are totally destitute of holiness, and can do nothing which is acceptable in the sight of God. Other principles were the doctrines of predestination, election, conversion by the Spirit of God, new obedience, and perseverance. Which of these doctrines is contended for by the liberal party in this country, or denied by the orthodox? But let us look at another class of principles. Protestants have uniformly held, that the Scriptures are the only and sufficient rule of faith and practice; that Popish traditions are of no authority; and that the decisions of councils are not infallible. Have the orthodox in this country ever denied either of these principles? If they have, it is new to us. Perhaps the orthodox have been unwilling to put the Scriptures into the hands of the common people in their mother tongue? If so, let the offence be proved. Let the guilty individuals be named; and we will heartily join in their condemnation. But it will be said, perhaps, that the orthodox have a creed, or creeds; in other words, they ex-

press, by a short summary, the principal doctrines, which they believe the Scriptures to contain. This is true; and it is precisely what *all the Protestant churches have uniformly done*, in perfect consistency with every principle of the Reformation. Let us hear no more of this miserable cant about Protestantism. The complaint is absolutely without foundation. As well might it be said, that the Inquisition of Goa, having travelled across the Indian and Atlantic oceans, (palaces, caverns and all,) has seated himself on Beacon hill; and that father *Josephus a Doloribus* sits there, on his black marble throne, daily sentencing the "worthy confessors" of Unitarianism to his subterranean dungeons. The liberal party are not contending for the privilege of thinking for themselves. This has never been denied them in this country. But they are contending for the privilege of thinking for themselves and the orthodox too; at least so far as to prescribe the manner, in which the orthodox shall regard them. While they mutilate the New Testament, and reject nearly all the fundamental doctrines of the Gospel; while they degrade the Savior to the condition of a fallible, peccable, and ignorant man;—they clamorously insist, that the orthodox should have just as good an opinion of them as they have of themselves, and should acknowledge them to be candid, impartial, enlightened, pious Christians. This is requiring too much. While they demand the privilege of thinking and acting for themselves, let them accord the same privilege to others.

Mr. Belsham predicts, that the time will come when the truth, by

which he means Unitarianism, will burst forth, in this country, "in all her glory." Fired at the thought, he indulges in the following figurative language, with which the history concludes.

"The dull hollow rumbling at the bottom of the sea, which is scarcely noticed by the inattentive traveller who is gliding carelessly over the solid plate of ice which encrusts the surface, is, to the wary and experienced observer, a sure presage of the speedy and sudden explosion of the immense superincumbent mass, and of the restoration of the imprisoned waves to their native freedom, to the consternation and often to the utter destruction of those who refuse to listen to the friendly premonition."

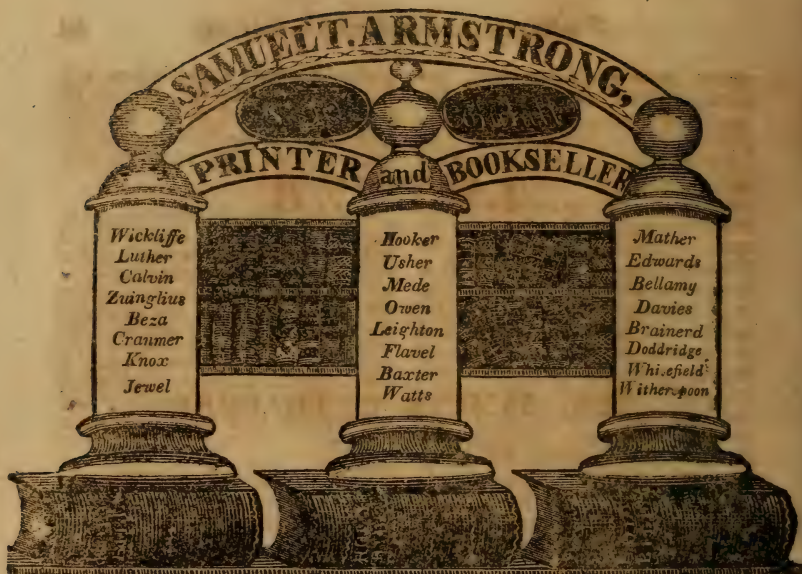
This is a fair and generous warning. We have heard "the dull hollow rumbling at the bottom of the sea." We exhort the churches "to listen to the friendly premonition;" lest, when *the fountains of the great deep shall be broken up*, those who are careless and inattentive should be overwhelmed by "the imprisoned waves" to "their consternation and utter destruction!"

[P. S. TO THE SECOND EDITION.]

We find that the assertion, contained in the foregoing review, that "the *predominant religion* of the liberal party is decidedly Unitarian, in Mr. Belsham's sense of the word," has been misunderstood by some readers. It is sufficient to say here, that we are prepared to defend the assertion, in what appears to us the natural meaning of the words. The Rev. Mr. Channing's letter on this subject will probably be considered in a future number of the Panoplist.

NOTICE.

THE PANOPLIST, from which the foregoing Review has been taken, is published every month by SAMUEL T. ARMSTRONG, Boston, price \$2 40 a year; the *eleventh* volume is now printing; *thirty-seven hundred and fifty copies* are printed and sold every month, and many more could be disposed of. Subscriptions for the ensuing volume, or *sets of the whole work*, will be attended to promptly; at \$2 75 per volume. The profits arising from the work are employed in diffusing the light of the Gospel in our own and in foreign countries.



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Fanny Woodbury, p. 6.

Letters from the Rev. Drs. Holmes, Baldwin, Dana and Sanders, and Rev. Messrs. Bates, Huntington and Winchell have recently been received; they will appear in order and in full on the Cover of the Panoplist. *Subscription Papers may be had gratis at No. 50, Cornhill.*

A

LETTER

TO THE

REV. SAMUEL C. THACHER,

ON THE

ASPERSIONS CONTAINED IN A LATE NUMBER OF THE PANOPLIST,

ON THE MINISTERS OF BOSTON AND THE VICINITY.

BY

WILLIAM E. CHANNING,

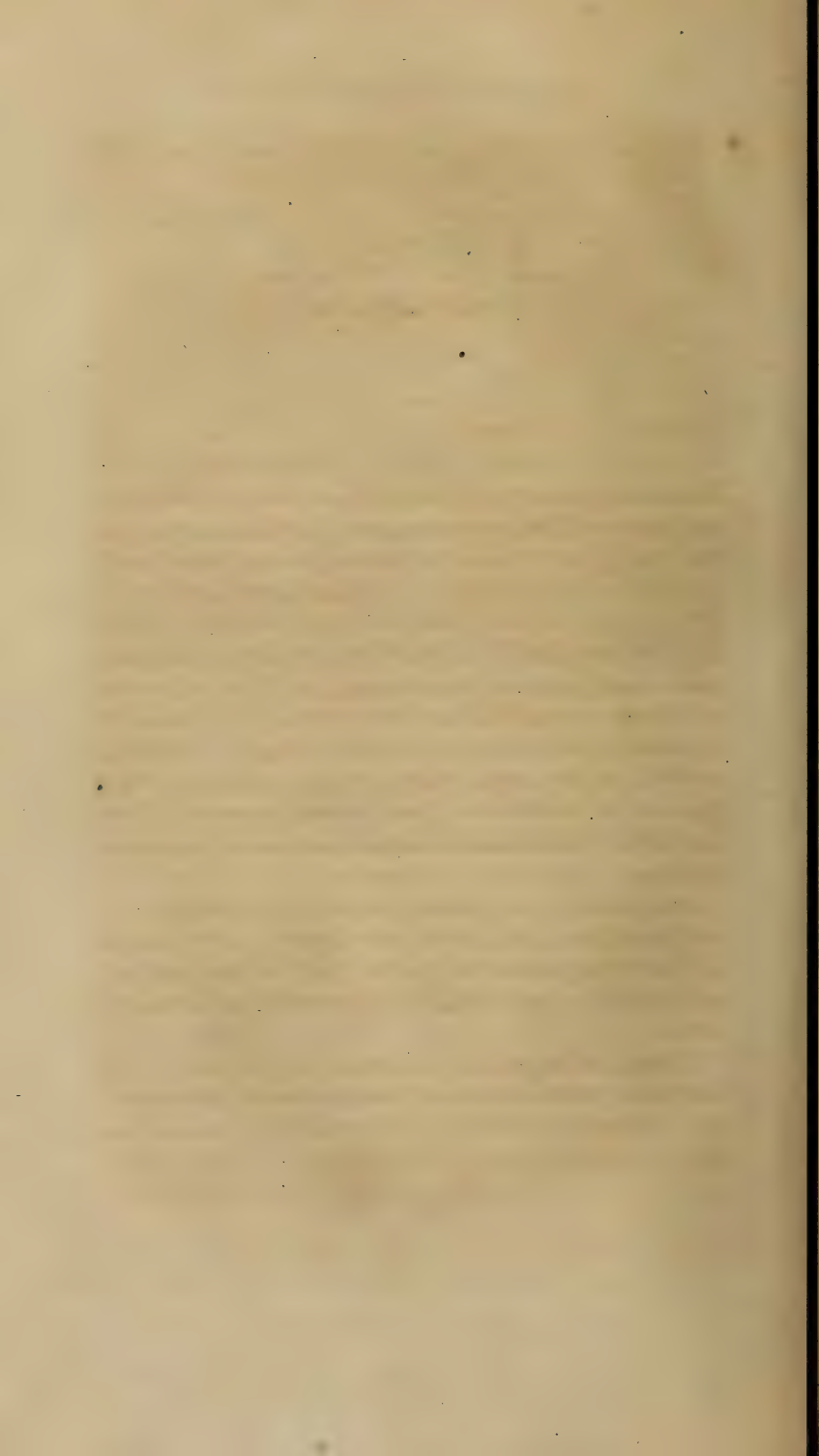
Minister of the Church of Christ in Federal Street, Boston.

SECOND EDITION.

BOSTON:

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1815.



A LETTER, &c.

MY FRIEND AND BROTHER,

I HAVE recollected with much satisfaction the conversation, which we held the other morning, on the subject of the late *Review* in the *Panoplist* for *June*, of a pamphlet, called "American Unitarianism." I was not surprised, but I was highly gratified, by the spirit with which you spoke of that injurious publication. Grief rather than indignation marked your countenance, and you mourned, that men, who bear the sacred and pacifick name of Christian, could prove so insensible to the obligations of their profession. Our conversation turned, as you recollect, on the *falsehood* of that *Review*; on its *motives*; and on the *duties* which are imposed on those ministers, whose good name and whose influence it was designed to destroy.

After leaving you, my thoughts still dwelt on the subject; and, painful as is the task, I have thought it my duty to exhibit to the publick the topicks which we discussed, as well as to add some reflections suggested by private meditation.

I bring to the subject a feeling, which I cannot well express in words, but which you can easily understand. It is a feeling, as if I were degrading myself by noticing the false and injurious charges contained in this review. I feel as if I were admitting, that we need vindication, that our

reputations want support, that our characters and lives do not speak for themselves. My selfrespect too is wounded, by coming into contact with assailants, who not only deny us the name of Christians, but withhold from us the treatment of gentlemen. These feelings, united with my love of peace, would induce me to pass over the Review in silence, if it were limited to the sphere within which we are personally known. In this sphere, I trust, its bitterness, coarseness, and misrepresentations will work their own cure; and that no other defence is required, but the tenour of our ministry and lives. But the work, in which this article is published, is industriously spread through the country, and through all classes of society. The aspersions which it contains are also diffused, as widely as possible, by conversation and even by newspapers. We owe then to ourselves, and what is more important to the cause of christian truth and charity, some remarks on the representations and spirit of the Review. You can easily conceive, how difficult it is to read again and again such a publication without catching some portion of an unchristian spirit. I do indeed feel myself breathing an atmosphere to which I am not accustomed. But my earnest desire is to remember whose disciple I am, and to temper displeasure with meekness and forgiveness.

The Panoplist Review, though extended over so many pages, may be compressed into a very narrow space. It asserts, 1. That the ministers of this town and its vicinity, and the great body of liberal christians are Unitarians in Mr. Belsham's sense of the word: that is, they believe that Jesus Christ is a mere man, who when on earth was liable to errour and sin; to whom we owe no gratitude for benefits which we are now receiving; and for whose future interposition we have no reason to hope.

2. The Review asserts, that these ministers and liberal christians are guilty of hypocritical concealment of their sentiments, and behave in a base, cowardly and hypocritical manner.

3. Christians are called to come out and separate themselves from these ministers and the liberal body of christians, and to withhold from them christian communion.

I will consider these three heads in their order, and may then notice some other topicks introduced into the Review.

The *first* assertion to be considered is, that the ministers of this town and vicinity, and the great body of liberal christians are Unitarians, in Mr. Belsham's sense of that word; and I wish every reader to look back and distinctly impress this sense on his memory. I am sensible that almost every liberal christian,* who reads these pages, will regard this charge with a mixture of surprise and indignation, and will almost doubt the correctness of my statement of the Review. I therefore add the following extracts from the last number of the Panoplist, in which the Review is contained. (P. 267.) "We feel entirely warranted to say that the *predominant religion* of the liberal party is decidedly Unitarian, in Mr. Belsham's sense of the word." P. 254, "We shall feel ourselves warranted hereafter, to speak of the fact as certain, that Unitarianism," meaning Mr. Belsham's, "is the predominant religion among the ministers and churches of Boston." P. 271, "The liberal party mutilate the New Testament, reject nearly all the fundamental doctrines of the gospel, and degrade the Saviour to the condition of a fallible, peccable, and ignorant man." It is unnecessary to multiply extracts to show, that not only Boston, but its vicinity, is involved in the charge. In fact, the liberal party, in general, as you see, is ranged under the standard of Mr. Belsham. Now we both of us know this statement

* See Note A.

to be false. This misrepresentation is founded chiefly on some letters written by the Rev. Dr. Freeman, and Mr. William Wells, of Boston, to the Rev. Mr. Lindsey and the Rev. Mr. Belsham, of London; which letters state, that many of the ministers and laymen of this quarter are Unitarian. You informed me in our late conversation, that Mr. Wells has assured you, that in his letter to Mr. Belsham, he used the word *Unitarian* in its proper and usual sense, as *opposed to Trinitarian*, as denoting a man who believes that God is *one* person, and not *three* persons. That Dr. Freeman attached the same meaning to the word, I cannot doubt, because I have once and again heard him give this very definition. If you will consult Miss Adams' *View of Religions*, the only authority which I have at hand, you will see, that this term belongs to persons, who differ widely in their views of Jesus Christ. She particularly quotes Mosheim, as saying, that Unitarians are Anti-Trinitarians. "The Socinians," Mosheim adds, "are also so called. The term is comprehensive, and is applicable to a great variety of persons, who, notwithstanding, agree in this common principle, that there is no *distinction in the Divine nature.*" The word Unitarian, taken in this its true sense, as including all who believe that there is no distinction of persons in God, is indeed, as Mosheim observes, of great extent. Dr. Watts, in the latter part of his life, was decidedly an Unitarian. So was Dr. Samuel Clarke; so was the late Dr. Eckley,* of this town; so, I am told by respectable authorities, are several Hopkinsian clergymen in New-England. The word *Unitarianism*, as denoting this opposition to Trinitarianism, undoubtedly expresses the character of a considerable part of the ministers of this town and its vicinity, and the commonwealth. But we both of us know, that their Unitarianism is of a very different

* See Note B.

kind from that of Mr. Belsham. We both agreed in our late conference, that a majority of our brethren believe, that Jesus Christ is more than man, that he existed before the world, that he literally came from heaven to save our race, that he sustains other offices than those of a teacher and witness to the truth, and that he still acts for our benefit, and is our intercessor with the Father. This we agreed to be the prevalent sentiment of our brethren. There is another class of liberal christians, who, whilst they reject the distinction of three persons in God, are yet unable to pass a definitive judgment on the various systems, which prevail, as to the nature and rank of Jesus Christ. They are met by difficulties on every side, and generally rest in the conclusion, that *He*, whom God has appointed to be our Saviour, must be precisely adapted to his work, and that acceptable faith consists in regarding and following him as our Lord, Teacher, and Saviour; without deciding on his nature or rank in the universe. There is another class, who believe the simple humanity of Jesus Christ; but these form a small proportion of the great body of Unitarians in this part of our country; and I very much doubt, whether of these, one individual can be found, who could conscientiously subscribe to Mr. Belsham's creed as given in the Review. The conduct of the Reviewer, in collecting all the opinions of that gentleman, not only on the Trinity, but on every other theological subject, in giving to the *whole* collection the name of *Unitarianism*, and in exhibiting this to the world as the creed of liberal christians in this region, is perhaps as criminal an instance of unfairness, as is to be found in the records of theological controversy. The fact is, that the great body of liberal christians would shrink from some of these opinions with as much aversion as from some of the gloomy doctrines of Calvin. You, my friend, well know, that Mr. Belsham is not acknowledged as a leader by any Unitarians in our country. I have heard from those, who

are thought to approach him most nearly in opinion, complaints of the extravagance of some of his positions, as unjust and prejudicial to the cause which he has undertaken to defend.

I trust, that the statement which has now been made, will not be considered as casting the least reproach on those amongst us, who believe in the simple humanity of Jesus Christ. Whilst I differ from them in opinion, I have certainly no disposition to deny them the name and privileges of christians. There are gentlemen of this class, whom I have the happiness to know, in whom I discover the evidences of a scrupulous uprightness, and a genuine piety; and there are others, whose characters, as portrayed by their biographers, appear to me striking examples of the best influences of christianity.

After considering the letters of Mr. Wells and Dr. Freeman, it is not necessary to enlarge on the other evidences of our adopting Mr. Belsham's creed, which have been adduced by the Reviewer. The Monthly Anthology is summoned as a proof. I have read as little of that work as of most periodical publications; but you, who know more of it, have expressed to me your confident persuasion, that, from beginning to end, the doctrine of the simple humanity of Christ is not once asserted. As to the General Repository, which is brought forward as another proof, I never for a moment imagined, that its editor was constituted or acknowledged as the organ of his brethren; and while its high literary merit has been allowed, I have heard some of its sentiments disapproved by the majority of those with whom I have conversed. With respect to the "Improved Version of the New Testament," I can speak with greater confidence. It is false, that this work was patronized and circulated by the ministers of Boston and the vicinity. It is impossible that such a fact could have escaped my notice, and I can

scarcely remember an individual, who, in speaking of this version, has not expressed an unfavourable opinion at least of some of its notes.

I repeat it, these remarks are not offered for the purpose of throwing any reproach on any class of Christians, but simply to repel a statement which is untrue, and which is intended to rank us under a denomination, which the people of this country have been industriously taught to abhor. It is this intention of rendering us odious, which constitutes the criminality of the charge, and which exposes its author to severe indignation. A man, who is governed by christian principles, will slowly and reluctantly become "the accuser of his brethren." He will inquire long and impartially before he attempts to fasten a bad name, (the most injurious method of assailing reputation) on an individual, and especially on a large class of the community. What severity of reproof then is merited by the author of this Review, who has laboured to attach, not only to professors, but to ministers of religion, a name and character which he hoped would awaken popular alarm, and endanger their influence, although a large majority of the accused have no participation in the pretended crime. That he intended to deceive, I am unwilling to assert; but the most charitable construction which his conduct will admit is, that his passions and party spirit have criminally blinded him, and hurried him into an act, which could have been authorized only by the strongest evidence, and the most impartial inquiry. The time may come, when he will view this transaction with other eyes; when the rage of party will have subsided; when the obligation of a fair and equitable temper will appear at least as solemn as the obligation of building up a sect; when misrepresentation, intended to injure, and originating, if not in malignity, yet in precipitancy and passion, will be felt to be a crime of no common aggravation. That

this time may soon come, and may bring with it not only remorse, but sincere repentance, I know to be your wish, and I trust it is my own.

II. I now come to the *second* charge of the Review : That the ministers of Boston and the vicinity, and the most considerable members of the liberal party "operate in "secret; entrust only the initiated with their measures; are "guilty of hypocritical concealment of their sentiments; "behave in a base and hypocritical manner, compared with "which Mr. Belsham's conduct, rotten as he is in doctrine "to the very core, is purity itself."* Such is the *decent* language scattered through this Review. This charge is infinitely more serious than the first. To believe with Mr. Belsham is no crime. But artifice, plotting, hypocrisy *are* crimes; and if we practise them, we deserve to be driven not only from the ministry, not only from the church, but from the society of the decent and respectable. Our own hearts, I trust, tell us at once how gross are these aspersions; and our acquaintance with our brethren authorizes us to speak in their vindication with the same confidence as in our own.

* We are accused of "the systematick practice of artifice," p. 242; of "hypocritical concealment," 251; of "cowardice in the concealment of our opinions," 260; of "cunning and dishonesty," 260; of "acting in a base, hypocritical manner," a manner "at which common honesty revolts," 260; a manner "incompatible with fidelity or integrity," 261. "The conduct of Mr. Belsham," we are told, "rotten as he is to the very core in point of doctrine, is purity itself, compared with the conduct of these men," 262. "In pretence all is politeness and liberality; in practice we find a rancour bitter as death, and cruel as the grave," 264. Let it be remembered that this is not to be considered as the invective and exaggeration, which we are unhappily accustomed to permit in a political pamphlet. It is found in a grave theological publication, and uttered by a man who declares that he "never took his pen in hand with greater caution, nor with a more imperious sense of duty." 259.

It is not to be wondered at, that those, who have charged us with holding sentiments which we reject, should proceed to charge us with hypocritically concealing our sentiments. Most of us have often contradicted Mr. Belsham's opinions : and they who insist that these opinions are ours, will be forced to maintain that we practise deceit. They start with a falsehood, and their conclusion cannot therefore be true.

I am not, however, disposed to dismiss this charge of artifice and hypocrisy so lightly. The proofs on which it rests are perhaps the most extraordinary which were ever adduced on so serious an occasion. The first evidence of our baseness is a letter from Dr. Freeman. It is unnecessary to enter into any examination of this letter. It is sufficient to observe, that it was written, according to the Review, in the year 1796 or 1797, that is, it was written when all the present congregational ministers in Boston, with the single exception of the venerated Dr. Lathrop, were receiving their education either at school or in college, and had not probably directed their thoughts towards the sacred office ; and before a considerable part of our brethren, now in the vicinity, were settled in the ministry. It is a melancholy thought, that accusations which would place us among the profligate part of society, are bitterly and furiously urged on such foundation as this !

But the next proof is still more remarkable. It is the letter of Mr. Wells to Mr. Belsham. In this letter Mr. Wells says, " Most of our Boston clergy and respectable laymen, among whom we have many enlightened theologians, are Unitarian. Nor do they think it at all necessary to conceal their sentiments, but express them without reserve when they judge it proper. I may safely say, the general habit of thinking and speaking upon this question is Unitarian." Can a more explicit passage be

conceived? The method in which it is distorted by the Reviewer can hardly be recollected without expressions of indignation. Towards the close of his Review, p. 269, in speaking of the persons on whom Mr. Wells “lavishes commendation,” he represents him as mentioning “most of the Boston clergy and respectable laymen, many of whom are enlightened theologians, who do not conceal their sentiments, but express them *when they judge it proper*.” This passage, as it stands in the Review, has the marks of quotation, as if taken from Mr. Wells’ letter. Let me ask you to look back, and compare it carefully with the second sentence, which I have extracted from that letter. You perceive, that by mutilating that sentence, and by printing the last words in Italicks, the reviewer has entirely done away the meaning of Mr. Wells, and contrived to give to the common reader a directly opposite impression to what that gentleman intended to convey. An unpervverted mind turns with sorrow and disgust from such uncharitable and disingenuous dealing; and why all this labour to distort what is so plain? The object is, to fix the character of knaves and hypocrites on a large class of christians and christian ministers. I might here be permitted to dip my pen in gall; but I do not write for those, whose moral feeling is so dull, as to need indignant comment on practices like these.

With respect to yourself, my friend, I presume no one will charge you with hypocritical concealment. Your situation offers you no temptation; and no one who has heard you preach, can ever have suspected you of a leaning towards Trinitarianism. As to myself, I have ever been inclined to cherish the most exalted views of Jesus Christ, which are consistent with the supremacy of the Father; and I have felt it my duty to depart from Mr. Belsham, in perhaps every sentiment which is peculiar to him on this subject. I have always been pleased with some of the sentiments of Dr. Watts on the intimate and peculiar union

between the Father and the Son. But I have always abstained most scrupulously from every expression which could be construed into an acknowledgment of the Trinity. My worship and sentiments have been Unitarian in the proper sense of that word. In conversation with my people, who have requested my opinion upon the subject, especially with those who consider themselves Trinitarians, I have spoken with directness and simplicity. Some of those who differ from me most widely, have received from me the most explicit assurances of my disbelief of the doctrine of the Trinity, and of my views in relation to the Saviour. As to my brethren in general, never have I imagined for a moment, from their preaching or conversation, that they had the least desire to be considered as Trinitarians; nor have I ever heard from them any views of God or of Jesus Christ, but Unitarian in the proper meaning of that word.

It is indeed true, as Mr. Wells says, that we seldom or never introduce the Trinitarian controversy into our pulpits. We are accustomed to speak of the Father as God, and of Jesus Christ as his son, as a distinct being from him, as dependent on him, subordinate to him, and deriving all from him. This phraseology pervades all our prayers, and all our preaching. We seldom or never, however, refer to any different sentiments, embraced by other christians, on the nature of God or of Jesus Christ. We preach precisely as if no such doctrine as the Trinity had ever been known. We do not attempt to refute it, any more than to refute the systems of the Sabellians, the Eutychians, or the Nestorians, or of the other sects who have debated these questions with such hot and unprofitable zeal. But, in following this course, we are not conscious of having contracted, in the least degree, the guilt of insincerity. We have aimed at making no false impression. We have only followed a general system, which we are persuaded to be

best for our people and for the cause of christianity ; the system of excluding controversy as much as possible from our pulpits. In compliance with this system, I have never assailed Trinitarianism ; nor have I ever said one word against Methodism, Quakerism, Episcopalianism, or the denomination of Baptists ; and I may add Popery, if I except a few occasional remarks on the intolerance of that system. The name of these sects, with that single exception, has never passed my lips in preaching, through my whole ministry, which has continued above twelve years. We all of us think it best to preach the truth, or what we esteem to be the truth, and to say very little about error, unless it be error of a strictly practical nature. A striking proof of our sentiments and habits on this subject may be derived from the manner in which you and myself have treated Calvinism. We consider the errors which relate to Christ's person as of little or no importance compared with the error of those who teach, that God brings us into life wholly depraved and wholly helpless, that he leaves multitudes without that aid which is indispensably necessary to their repentance, and then plunges them into everlasting burnings and unspeakable torture, for not repenting. This we consider as one of the most injurious errors which ever darkened the christian world ; and none will pretend that we have any thing to fear from exposing this error to our people. On the contrary, we could hardly select a more popular topick ; —and yet our hearers will bear witness how seldom we introduce this topick into our preaching. The name of Calvinist has never, I presume, been uttered by us in the pulpit. Our method is, to state what we conceive to be more honourable, and ennobling, and encouraging views of God's character and government, and to leave these to have their effect, without holding up other christians to censure or contempt. We could, if we were to make strenuous efforts, render the

name of Calvinist as much a word of reproach in our societies, as that of Unitarian is in some parts of our country. But we esteem it a solemn duty to disarm instead of exciting the bad passions of our people. We wish to promote among them a spirit of universal charity. We wish to make them condemn their own bad practices, rather than the erroneous speculations of their neighbour. We love them too sincerely to imbue them with the spirit of controversy.

In thus avoiding controversy, we have thought that we deserved, not reproach, but some degree of praise for our self denial. Every preacher knows how much easier it is to write a controversial than a practical discourse; how much easier it is to interest an audience by attacking an opposite party, than by stating to them the duties and motives of the gospel. We often feel, that our mode of preaching exposes us to the danger of being trite and dull; and I presume we have often been tempted to gratify the love of disputation which lurks in every society. But so deeply are we convinced, that the great end of preaching is to promote a spirit of love, a sober, righteous and godly life, and that every doctrine is to be urged simply and exclusively for this end, that we have sacrificed our ease, and have chosen to be less striking preachers, rather than to enter the lists of controversy.

We have seldom or never assailed the scheme of the Trinity, not only from our dislike to controversy in general, but from a persuasion that this discussion would, above all others, perplex and needlessly perplex a common congregation, consisting of persons of all ages, capacities, degrees of improvement, and conditions in society. This doctrine we all regard as the most unintelligible about which christians have ever disputed. If it do not mean that there are Three Gods, (a construction which its advocates indignant-

ly repel,) we know not what it means; and we have not thought that we should edify common hearers by attacking a doctrine, altogether inconceivable and wholly beyond the grasp of our faculties.—We have recollected too the mischiefs of the Trinitarian controversy in past ages, that it has been a firebrand lighting the flames of persecution, and kindling infernal passions in the breasts of christians; and we have felt no disposition to interest the feelings of our congregation in a dispute, which has so disgraced the professed disciples of the meek and lowly Jesus.—Many of us have been disinclined, not only to assail systems which we do not believe, but even to enforce the views which we have given of the rank and character of Jesus Christ; because we have known, how divided the best men have been on these topicks, and how largely we ourselves partake of the fallibility of our nature; because we have wished, that our hearers should derive their impressions on these points as much as possible from the scriptures; and because we have all been persuaded, that precision of views upon these subjects is in no degree essential to the faith or practice of a christian.—We have considered the introduction of the Trinitarian controversy into the pulpit, as the less necessary, because we have generally found that common christians admit that distinction between God and his Son, and that subordination of the Son, which we believe to be the truth; and as to that very small part of our hearers, who are strongly attached to the doctrine of the Trinity, while we have not wished to conceal from them our difference of opinion, we have been fully satisfied, that the most effectual method of promoting their holiness and salvation was to urge on them perpetually those great truths and precepts, about which there is little contention, and which have an immediate bearing on the temper and the life.—To conclude, we have never entered into discussions of the doctrine of the Tri-

nity, because we are not governed by a proselyting temper. I will venture to assert, that there is not on earth a body of men who possess less of the spirit of proselytism, than the ministers of this town and vicinity. Accustomed as we are to see genuine piety in all classes of christians, in Trinitarians and Unitarians, in Calvinists and Arminians, in Episcopalians, Methodists, Baptists, and Congregationalists, and delighting in this character wherever it appears, we are little anxious to bring men over to our peculiar opinions. I could smile at the idea of a *Unitarian plot*, were not this fiction intended to answer so unworthy an end. There cannot be a doubt, that had we seriously united for the purpose of spreading Unitarianism by any and every means, by secret insinuations against those who differ from us, by *uncharitable denunciations*, and by the other usual arts of sects, we might have produced in this part of the country an Unitarian heat and bitterness not inferiour to that with which Trinitarianism is too often advocated. But not the slightest whisper of any concert for this end has ever reached me; and as to these arts, our people can best say how far we have practised them. Our people will testify, how little we have sought to influence them on the topicks of dispute among christians, how little we have laboured to make them partisans, how constantly we have besought them to look with candour on other denominations, and to delight in all the marks which others exhibit of piety, and goodness. Our great and constant object has been to promote the spirit of Christ, and we have been persuaded, that in this way we should most effectually promote the interests of christian truth.

These remarks will shew, how entirely unfounded are the charges, which are adduced against us, of insincerity and base hypocrisy. And are we not authorized, my brother, to repel these charges with some degree of warmth? Are

we not called to speak in the language of indignant and insulted virtue, as well as of pity and sorrow, in relation to the man, who is propagating these unmerited reproaches? We are christians by profession, and ministers of the Gospel, governed, as we humbly hope, by the principles of Jesus Christ. We honour his name; we remember his dying love with gratitude; and I hope we are ready to meet the loss of all things in his service; and yet we are represented to our people as unprincipled men, wearing a mask, and practising the basest arts. And we are thus loaded with invective and abuse, that we may be robbed of that influence, which, if we know ourselves, we wish to exert for the honour of God, and the salvation of mankind; that we may be robbed of the confidence and affection of our societies, and may be forsaken by them as unworthy the christian name. Need I ask, whether this be a light injury or an ordinary crime?

On the present occasion, when our moral character is impeached, we are justified, I think, in an appeal to our respective societies; and I trust, my friend, that we and our accused brethren can say with confidence to those to whom we minister, "Brethren, you know us, for we live among you; we visit you in your families, we speak to you from the pulpit; we repair to you in your sorrows, and we sit too at the table of your festivity. You know something of our conduct in our families, and in the common relations of life. We are, indeed sensible, that in all these situations, we have exhibited to you much of human imperfection, and our frequent prayer to God is, that he will forgive our deficiencies. But, brethren, we ask you to recollect our general deportment and ministrations. Have we seemed to you men of artifice and deceit, men without reverence for truth, and without the fear of God, men of sordid and selfish views, seeking your wealth or applause, and careless of your souls? Have we ever seemed to you to be

labouring to build up a cause, or to establish a party, which we were ashamed to acknowledge? Have we ever directed you to any foundation of hope or guide of life, but the Gospel of Christ? Have we not continually exhorted you, as a father doth his children, that you would walk worthy of this religion from heaven? In your affliction have we not supplied you with the consolations which it offers? and in the more dangerous seasons of enjoyment, have we not discovered the purity and moderation which it inculcates? To what work of christian usefulness have you found us reluctant? In what relation of life have you found us unfaithful? On what occasion have we discovered, that our profession is a cloak of hypocrisy? It is not our design, by these questions, to advance our own glory; God forbid it: But we wish to impress you deeply with the criminality of those aspersions, which are cast habitually on your teachers; and with the urgent necessity of discouraging that unrelenting party spirit, which has no respect for innocence or virtue, and which threatens to overwhelm our churches with discord and contention."

III. I now come to the third head of the Review, which I propose to consider. The Reviewer, having charged us with holding the opinions of Mr. Belsham, and hypocritically concealing them, solemnly calls on christians who differ from us in sentiment, "to come out and be separate from us, and to withhold communion with us;" and a paragraph of the bitterest contempt and insult is directed against those ministers who, whilst they disagree on the controverted points of theology, are yet disposed to love and treat us as brethren. This language does not astonish me, when I recollect the cry of heresy which has been so loudly raised against this part of the country. But I believe that this is the first instance, in which christians have been deliberately called to deny us the christian name and privileges. As such let it

be remembered ; and let the consequences of it lie on its authors.

Why is it that our brethren are thus instigated to cut us off, as far as they have power, from the body and church of Christ ? Let every christian weigh well the answer. It is not because we refuse to acknowledge Jesus Christ as our Lord and Master ; it is not because we neglect to study his word ; it is not, because our lives are wanting in the spirit and virtues of his gospel. It is, because after serious investigation, we cannot find in the Scriptures, and cannot adopt as instructions of our Master, certain doctrines, which have divided the church for ages, which have perplexed the best and wisest men, and which are very differently conceived even by those who profess to receive them. It is, in particular, because we cannot adopt the language of our brethren, in relation to a doctrine, which we cannot understand, and which is expressed in words not only unauthorized by the Scripture, but as we believe, in words employed without meaning, (unless they mean that there are three Gods,) by those who insist upon them. This is our crime, that we cannot think and speak with our brethren on subjects the most difficult and perplexing, on which the human mind was ever engaged. For this we are pursued with the cry of heresy, and are to have no rest until virtually excommunicated by our brethren.

Were the christian world more enlightened on the nature of heresy, they would not be so much alarmed when they hear it attached to their brethren. Most earnestly do I wish that the Dissertation of Dr. Campbell on Heresy, in his "Translation of the Four Gospels," were more generally read and considered. He has proved, I think, very satisfactorily, that *heresy*, as the word is used in the Scriptures, does not consist in the adoption or profession of wrong opinions, but in a *spirit of division, of dissension, of party, in a factious and turbulent*

temper ; and that the heretick is not a man who entertains erroneous or even injurious sentiments, but *one who loves to be called Rabbi and master* ; who has a *disposition to separate christians, to create or to extend sects and parties*. The conclusion of the Dissertation of this most judicious writer on Heresy, deserves to be imprinted on every mind in these days of dissension. “ No person, who, in the spirit “ of candour and charity, adheres to that which to the best “ of his judgment is right, though in this opinion he should “ be mistaken, is in the *scriptural* sense either *schismatick* “ or *heretick* ; and he, on the contrary, whatever sect he “ belongs to, is more entitled to these odious appellations, “ *who is most apt to throw the imputation upon others*. “ Both terms, (for they denote only different degrees of “ the same bad quality,) *always indicate a disposition and “ practice unfriendly to peace and harmony and love.*” * If these views be correct, there is no difficulty in deciding, to what persons among us the name of heretick most justly belongs ; and we shall be forced to conclude, that of all publications which have issued from our press, no one is more tinctured with the spirit of heresy, than the Review, which it is my painful office to examine.

Most earnestly do I hope that christians will weigh well the nature and guilt of schism, the consequences of separation, and the spirit of their religion, before they adopt the measure recommended in this Review. For myself, the universe would not tempt me to bear a part in this work of dividing Christ’s church, and of denouncing his followers. If there be an act which, above all others, is a transgression of the christian law, it is this. What is the language of our Master ? “ A *new* commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another. By this shall all men know, that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.”

* Campbell’s Gospels, Vol. II. p. 141, Boston edition.

“Bear ye one another’s burdens,” says St. Paul, “and so fulfil *the law of Christ*.” But what says this Review? “Cast out your brethren, and treat them as heathens.” I know it will be said, that christians are not called upon to reject real christians, but hereticks and false pretenders to the name. But heresy, we have seen, is not a false opinion, but a sectarian spirit; and as to false pretences, we desire those who know us, to put their hands on their hearts, and to say, whether they can for a moment believe that we hypocritically profess to follow the instructions of Jesus Christ? Does charity discover nothing in our language and lives to justify the hope that we are united to Jesus Christ by love for his character, and by participation of his spirit? Most earnestly would I advise those persons who are inclined to follow the instigations of this Review, to think seriously before they act; to remember, that Jesus Christ has solemnly forbidden uncharitable judgment, that he regards the injuries which are done to his followers, through a censorious spirit, as done to himself, and that christians cannot more surely forsake their Lord, the Prince of peace, than by following an inciter to denunciation and division.

I wish that my motives for these earnest remonstrances against division may be understood. I feel as little personal interest in the subject as any individual in the community. Were the proposed separation to take place, I should still enjoy the ordinances of the gospel in the society of those whom I best love. The excommunication which is threatened gives me no alarm. I hear this angry thunder murmur at a distance, with as little concern as if it were the thunder of the pope, from whom it seems indeed to be borrowed. But whilst I fear nothing for myself, I do fear and feel for that body of which Christ is the head, which has been bleeding for ages under the contests of christians, and which is now threatened with a new wound. I feel for the cause

of our common christianity, which I am set to defend, and which has suffered inconceivably more from the bad passions and divisions of its friends, than from all the arts and violence of its foes. I cannot but look forward with pain to the irritations, hatreds, bitter recriminations, censoriousness, spiritual pride, and schismatical spirit which will grow up under this system of denunciation and exclusion, and which may not only convulse many churches at the present moment, but will probably end in most unhappy divisions among the very christians who denounce us; who seem indeed to be united, now that a common enemy is to be trodden under foot, but who have sufficient diversities of opinion, to awaken against each other all the fury of intolerance, when this shall have become the temper and habit of their minds. I repeat it, I have no interest in this point, but as a christian; and as such, I look with a degree of horror on this attempt to inflame and distract our churches. Errour of opinion is an evil too trifling to be named in comparison with this practical departure from the Gospel, with this proud, censorious, overbearing temper, which says to a large body of christians, "stand off, we are holier than you."

Before I leave this question of separation, let me just observe, that by this Review, not only we and our brethren are cut off from the body of Christ; but the most venerable men who have left us, and who, when living, were esteemed ornaments of the church, such men as the late President Willard, Dr. Howard, Dr. Eckley, Dr. Eliot, and Dr. Barnard, are declared unworthy of the communion of the church on earth, and of course unfit for the fellowship of saints in heaven. It would be easy to show, that the same dreadful sentence is past on some of the most exemplary men in civil life, to whom this commonwealth is indebted for the stability of its civil and religious institu-

tions.* These all having lived, as they thought, in the faith of Christ, and having died with a hope in his precious promises, are now cut off from his church, and denied his name. What christian does not shudder at this awful temerity in a frail and erring fellow-being, who thus presumes to sit in judgment on men, who in purity and sincerity and devotion to God, were certainly not inferiour to himself? stop here, for I wish not to indulge in language of severity; and this subject, if any, may be left to speak for itself to the heart of the christian.

Having thus considered the three principal heads in the Review, I now proceed, as I proposed, to offer a few words of friendly admonition, as to the temper and conduct which become our brethren and ourselves, under the injuries which we receive. The first suggestion you have undoubtedly anticipated. It is, that we remember the great duty which belongs to us as christians, of regarding our enemies with good will, if possible with a degree of approbation, at least with displeasure tempered with compassion. We profess to accord with that apostle, who has taught us that charity is greater than faith and hope, more excellent than the tongue of angels and the understanding of all mysteries. Let us prove our sincerity by our deeds. Let us cheerfully avail ourselves of every circumstance, which will justify the belief, that the cruel and bitter remarks of our adversaries proceed not from a wanton and unblushing contempt of truth, but from deep rooted prejudices, false views of religion, unsuspected biasses to censoriousness, and a disor-

* Were it an object to enumerate all who are involved in this sweeping sentence of condemnation, I might mention Locke, Newton, Grotius, Dr. Samuel Clarke, Lardner, Price, Paley, and other names most conspicuous among the friends of science and religion. All these were decided Unitarians; and can any imagine that christianity is to be promoted by driving these men from the christian church?

dered imagination ; and whilst we lament that they do not partake more largely of the best influences of the gospel, let us be induced to hope that their profession of the gospel is sincere, and that their departure from its spirit is unknown to themselves. As to the great mass of those christians, who view us with so much jealousy, we must remember, that they know us only by report, that they believe as they are taught by men to whom they ascribe an eminent sanctity, and that they are liable to be carried away on this, as on every other subject, by loud assertion, and by addresses to their fears. Accustomed as they are to hear us branded with names and epithets, to which they have attached no definite ideas, but which seem to them to express every thing depraved, can we wonder that they shrink from us with a kind of terrour ? Towards this great class of our opposers, we certainly owe nothing but kindness ; and we should esteem it an unspeakable happiness, that we can look with so much pleasure and hope on those by whom we are dreaded and shunned ; that we are not obliged by our system to regard *our* adversaries as the enemies of God, and the objects of his wrath. On this point, above all others, I would be urgent. Our danger is, that reproach will hurry us into language or conduct unbecoming the spirit of our master. Let us remember that our opposers cannot ultimately injure us, unless we permit them to awaken bad passions, and to impair our virtues. Let us remember what is due from us to our religion. The more that our age is uncharitable, the more that the glory of the gospel is obscured by its being exhibited as a source of censoriousness and contention, the more we owe it to our Lord to wipe off this reproach from his truth, to shew the loveliness of his religion, to show its power in changing the heart into the image of divine forbearance and forgiveness. Is the gospel at this moment receiving deep wounds in the house of its

friends ? Let us guard with new jealousy its interests and honour.

The second suggestion I would offer, is this. Whilst we disapprove and lament the unchristian spirit of some of our opposers, and the efforts which are used to make us odious, let us yet acknowledge that there is kindness in that Providence, which permits this trial to befall us. We esteem it indeed a hardship to be numbered by our brethren among the enemies of that Saviour whom we love. But let us remember, that we as well as others need affliction : and it is my persuasion and hope that God intends by this dispensation to purify our characters and extend our usefulness. The singular prosperity which we have enjoyed, has undoubtedly exposed us to peculiar temptations. Perhaps in no part of the world is the condition of ministers more favoured than ours. Whilst we receive nothing of a superstitious homage or a blind submission, we find ourselves respected by all classes of society, and, may I not say, distinguished by the eminent, the enlightened and the good ? We are received with a kind of domestick affection into the families of our parishioners. Our sufferings call forth their sympathy, and in sickness we enjoy every aid which tenderness and liberality can bestow. Our ministrations are attended with a seriousness, which, however due to the truth which we deliver, we often feel to be poorly deserved, by the imperfect manner in which it is dispensed. In our societies there are no divisions, no jealousies, no parties to disturb us. Whilst for these singular blessings, we should give thanks to the Author of all good, we should remember, that human virtue is often unable to sustain uninterrupted prosperity ; that a condition so favoured tends to awaken pride and self-indulgence ; and that God, who knows us better than we know ourselves, may see that we need reproach and opposition to make us better

men and better ministers. I can certainly say for myself, that the spirit of denunciation in our country, has led me to a more serious and habitual study of the scriptures, and to a deeper feeling of my responsibility, than I should have attained in a more peaceful condition. Let us then resign ourselves to God, who in infinite wisdom sees fit to expose us to the scourge of evil tongues. Let this trial awaken us to new watchfulness, devotion, and fidelity; and we may trust that it will be overruled to the extension of our usefulness, and to the promotion of pure and undefiled religion.

A third, and a very important suggestion is this : Let us hold fast our uprightness. I have said, that the opposition to which we are exposed has its advantages; but whilst it preserves us from the temptation of prosperity, it brings some temptation of its own, which we cannot too steadfastly resist. It will try our integrity. That our churches are to be generally shaken by the assault which is made upon them, I am far from believing. But some may suffer. It is not impossible, that the efforts which are now employed to direct against us the uncharitableness and mistaken zeal of the country, and to spread disaffection through the most uninstructed and the most easily excited classes of society, may produce some effect. We know the fluctuations of the human mind. We know that the sincerest christians are often unduly influenced by timidity, and may be brought to suspect a minister, when he is decried as a heretick, who is leading souls to hell. It requires more strength of nerves and more independence of mind than all good people possess, to withstand this incessant clamour. A storm then may be gathering over some of us, and the sufferers may be tempted to bend to it. But God forbid, my friend, that any of us should give support to the aspersions cast on our uprightness, by ever suppressing our convictions, or speaking a language foreign to our hearts. Through good report

and through evil report, let us with simplicity and sincerity declare what we believe to be the will of God and the way to Heaven, and thus secure to ourselves that peace of conscience which is infinitely better than the smiles of the world. Let us never forget, that the most honoured condition on earth is that of being sufferers for the sake of righteousness, for adherence to what we deem the cause of God and holiness, and let us welcome suffering, if it shall be appointed us, as bringing us nearer to our persecuted Lord, and his injured apostles. My brother, we profess to count man's judgment as a light thing, to esteem this world and all which it offers to be vanity. We profess to look up to a heavenly inheritance, and to hope that we shall one day mingle with angels and just men made perfect. And with these sublime hopes, shall we tremble before frail and fallible fellow creatures, be depressed by difficulties, or shrink from the expression of what we deem important and useful truth? God forbid.

I have time to add but one more suggestion. Let us beware lest opposition and reproach lead any of us into a sectarian attachment to our peculiar opinions. This is a danger to which persons of ardent and irritable temper are peculiarly exposed. Too many of us are apt to cling to a system in proportion as it is assailed, to consider ourselves pledged to doctrines which we have openly espoused, to rally round them as if our own honour and interest were at stake, and to assert them with more and more positiveness, as if we were incapable of error. This is the infirmity of our frail nature; and whilst we condemn it in others, let us not allow it in ourselves. Let us be what we profess to be, patient inquirers after truth, open to conviction, willing to listen to objections, willing to renounce error, willing to believe that we as well as others may have been warped in our opinions, by education and situation, and that others

may have acquired important truths which, through weakness or prejudice, we may have overlooked. Were we a party, anxious to make proselytes, we should do well to be positive and overbearing. But we profess to be anxious that our fellow christians should inquire for themselves into the difficulties of religion, instead of implicitly receiving what we have embraced. We profess to believe, that candid and impartial research will guide mankind to a purer system of christianity, than is now to be found in any church or country under Heaven. Most earnestly do I hope that we shall not be betrayed by any violence of assault into a sectarian heat and obstinacy, which will discredit our profession, and obstruct this glorious reformation of the church of God.

I have thus, my brother, considered the charges, by which we and our brethren have been assailed, and have endeavoured to recommend the temper with which we should meet reproach and insult. I intended to offer a few remarks on some other topicks introduced into the Review : but this letter is already extended far beyond the limits which I originally prescribed. I cannot, however, pass over in silence the charges against Harvard University, that venerable institution, which so many excellent men in this commonwealth are accustomed to regard with filial affection and honour, and to which we are all so much indebted for the light of knowledge, and for whatever capacities of usefulness to society we may possess. The statement of the Reviewer, that the propagation of Unitarianism in that University is the object of regular and well concerted exertion, is altogether false. I am persuaded that such a plan never entered the thoughts of those to whom the department of theological instruction is entrusted. The books in which the classes are taught, were selected for the very purpose of avoiding, as far as possible, the controversies of theolo-

gians, and the communication of any peculiarities of opinion to the students. They are, "Grotius on the Truth of the Christian Religion," "Paley's Evidences," "Butler's Analogy," and "Griesbach's New Testament." The charge of the Reviewer, that the students, instructed as they are in these works, by a professor of exemplary purity and uprightness, are yet *taught to deny Jesus Christ*, will, I trust, excite the indignation and abhorrence of every unperverted mind.

Had I time, I should feel it my duty to offer some remarks on the general *style* of the publication which I am called to examine. It not only abounds in misrepresentation, and breathes an unchristian spirit, but it is written in a style which tends to deprave the taste and manners of the community. It is suited to give a coarse and vulgar character to the conversation and deportment of those christians whom it may influence. It abounds in sneer and insult, and bears the marks of a writer better fitted to fill the pages of an inflammatory newspaper, than to be the guide of the mild and benevolent disciples of Jesus Christ. I trust, however, that its style and spirit will do much to counteract its pernicious tendency. I have too much respect for this people to believe that wanton assaults on the moral character of ministers and private christians will be encouraged and approved. I even hope that good will in many cases result from this publication. I trust, that those christians who have been partially misled by the denouncing spirit of the times, will now pause and consider; that all christians, of whatever name, who have any delicacy and tenderness of feeling, will learn the true character of that unhallowed zeal which is seeking to divide our churches; and that in this way, some important aid will be given to the cause of peace and charity. May God, whose glory it is to bring good from evil, thus cause "the wrath of man to praise him."

I think it proper, in conclusion, to observe that I shall not feel myself bound to notice any replies which may be made to this letter, especially if they appear in the Pano-plist. I consider that work as having forfeited all claim on the confidence of candid, upright, and honourable men. If any remarks on this letter shall appear, written with the spirit of a christian, or in the style of a gentleman, I shall read them with care, and I hope with impartiality ; and I shall readily retract any of my opinions or statements which I shall see to be erroneous, if they shall be thought sufficiently important to demand publick acknowledgment.

I now commit this humble effort to promote the peace and union of the church, and the cause of truth and free inquiry, to the blessing of Almighty God. That in writing it, I have escaped every unchristian feeling, I dare not hope ; and for every departure from the spirit of his gospel, I implore his forgiveness. If I have fallen into errour, I beseech him to discover it to my own mind, and to prevent its influence on the minds of others. It is an unspeakable consolation that we and our labours are in his hand, and that the cause of the gospel is his peculiar care. That he may honour us as the instruments of extending the knowledge and the spirit of the gospel, is the earnest prayer of your friend and brother in Christ,

W. E. CHANNING.

Boston, June 20, 1815.



NOTES.

NOTE A, page 5.

I HAVE used the phrase or denomination *Liberal Christians*, because it is employed by the Reviewer to distinguish those whom he assails. I have never been inclined to claim this appellation for myself or my friends, because as the word *liberality* expresses the noblest qualities of the human mind, freedom from local prejudices and narrow feelings, the enlargement of the views and affections,—I have thought that the assumption of it would savour of that spirit, which has attempted to limit the words *orthodox* and *evangelical* to a particular body of christians. As the appellation, however, cannot well be avoided, I will state the meaning which I attach to it.

By a liberal christian I understand one, who is disposed to receive as his brethren in Christ, all who in the judgment of charity, sincerely profess to receive Jesus Christ as their Lord and Master. He rejects all tests or standards of christian faith and of christian character, but the word of Jesus Christ and of his inspired apostles. He thinks it an act of disloyalty to his Master to introduce into the church creeds of fallible men as bonds of union, or terms of christian fellowship. He calls himself by no name derived from human leaders, disclaims all exclusive connexion with any sect or party, professes himself a member of the church universal on earth and in heaven, and cheerfully extends the hand of brotherhood to every man of every name who discovers the spirit of Jesus Christ.

According to this view of liberal christians, they cannot be called a party. They are distinguished only by refusing to separate themselves in any form or degree from the great body of Christ. They are scattered too through all classes of Christians.

I have known Trinitarians and Calvinists, who justly deserve the name of liberal, who regard with affection all who appear to follow Jesus Christ in temper and life, however they may differ on the common points of theological controversy. To this class of christians, which is scattered over the earth, and which I trust has never been extinct in any age, I profess and desire to belong. God send them prosperity.—In this part of the country, liberal christians, as they have been above described, are generally, though by no means universally, Unitarians in the proper sense of that word. It is of this part of them that I chiefly speak in this letter.

I cannot forbear enforcing the sentiments of this note and of the letter by a passage from the venerable Baxter, as I find it quoted by Grove from the preface to the second part of “Saints’ Everlasting Rest.”

“Two things have set the church on fire, and been the plagues of it above one thousand years;—1st. Enlarging our creed, and making more fundamentals than ever God made. 2d. Composing, and so *imposing*, our creeds and confessions in our own words and phrases. When men have learned more manners and humility than to accuse God’s language as too general and obscure, as if they could mend it—and have more dread of God and compassion on themselves, than to make those to be fundamentals or certainties which God never made so; and when they reduce their confessions, 1st. to their due extent, and 2d. to *scripture phrases*, that dissenters may not scruple subscribing—then, and I think never till then, shall the church have peace about doctrinals. It seems to me no heinous Socinian notion which Chillingworth is blamed for, viz. *Let all men believe the Scripture, and that only, and endeavour to believe it in the true sense, and promise this, and require no more of others, and they shall find this not only a better, but the only means to suppress heresy and restore unity.*”

NOTE B, page 6.

I have mentioned the name of Dr. Eckley, because his opinions on this subject were again and again expressed before me with perfect frankness, and are stated with great distinctness in his letter to the Rev. Thomas Worcester of Salisbury, from which I subjoin an extract.

“My plan, when I saw you, as I think I intimated, respecting the Son of God, was very similar to what your brother* has now adopted. The common plan of three self-existent persons forming one *Essence* or *infinite Being*, and one of these persons being *united to a man*, but not in the least humbling himself or suffering, completely leads to and ends in Socinianism; and though it claims the form of *orthodoxy*, it is a *shadow* without the *substance*; it eludes inspection; and I sometimes say to those who are strenuous for this doctrine, that they take away my Lord, and I know not where they place him.”—“The *orthodoxy*, so called, of *Waterland*, is as repugnant to my reason and views of religion, as the *heterodoxy* of *Lardner*; and I am at a loss to see that any solid satisfaction, for a person who wishes to find salvation through the death of the SON OF GOD, can be found in either.”—“I seek for a plan which exalts the personal character and attributes of the SON OF GOD in the *highest possible degree*. The plan which your brother hath chosen does this—The scheme he has adopted affords light and comfort to the christian. I have long thought so; and I continue to think I have not been mistaken.”

* Rev. Noah Worcester.

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LETTER

TO THE

REV. WILLIAM E. CHANNING,

ON THE SUBJECT OF HIS LETTER TO THE

REV. SAMUEL C. THATCHER,

RELATING TO THE

REVIEW IN THE PANOPLIST

OF

AMERICAN UNITARIANISM.

BY SAMUEL WORCESTER, D. D.

PASTOR OF THE TABERNACLE CHURCH, SALEM.

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REV. AND DEAR SIR,

I HAVE read your Letter to your Friend and Brother, the Rev. SAMUEL C. THATCHER, with some pleasure and with much regret. The causes of the one and of the other will in part be laid open in the subsequent remarks, which I have thought proper to address in the form of a letter to you. I need make no apology: the subject is deeply and extensively interesting; and involves considerations of infinite moment to the general cause, to which you and I profess to be sacredly devoted. Nor shall I make any professions of candour, or charity: for I have been taught by the best of books, that "charity vaunteth not itself, doth not behave itself unseemly;" from other books I have learned, that high professions too often serve to cover a temper very different from that which "is not easily provoked," but "suffereth long and is kind;" and I am thoroughly convinced, that persons who have the greatest confidence in their good dispositions, do not always know "what manner of spirit they are of."

I wish it to be understood, distinctly, that I have no connexion, or privity in this business, with the writer of the Review, which is the subject of your strictures. I write not in his behalf; but in behalf of the general interests of truth, and justice, and mercy. He probably will answer for himself; and to him I shall leave the particular vindication of himself, his statements and conclusions, his spirit and style: a labour which does not belong to me, and which I should be less disinclined to undertake, were the Review in all respects exactly such as I could wish it to have been. It might perhaps have been better, had the Reviewer been less intent on exciting those whose cause he espouses, and consulted more the conviction and benefit of those against whom his animadversions are directed.

With what justice, and to what extent, a similar remark might be applied to your Letter, you, my dear Sir, and your friends will consider. It cannot, however, but be regretted,

that you should have found it necessary to sit down to write, while "breathing an atmosphere to which you were not accustomed;" while perturbed with the feelings which, in spite of all your efforts to restrain them, are so copiously infused into the entire body of your Letter. But all reasonable allowance should be made for the urgency of the case. Had you waited till the excitement had subsided, your opportunity for preventing or counteracting the impressions which the Review was likely to make, might have been lost. I frankly confess, that a similar reason has induced me to avail myself of the earliest remission of other pressing calls of duty, for bestowing some attention on your subject. Could you, however, have waited till the cool of the day, though probably your Letter would have been less animated, and less adapted to a particular purpose, it would not, I am persuaded, have displayed less of the meekness of wisdom, or been less correct in its representations.

You bring, dear Sir, against the Reviewer an accusation of "falsehood:" an accusation certainly of no trivial kind, and never to be lightly preferred against any one. "The Review," you say, "asserts, 1. That the ministers of this town "[Boston] and its vicinity and the great body of liberal "christians are Unitarians, in Mr. Belsham's sense of the "word. 2. That these ministers and liberal christians are "guilty of hypocritical concealment of their sentiments, and "behave in a base, cowardly and hypocritical manner." In these two assertions, especially in the first of them, it should seem, lies the alleged falsehood of the Reviewer. These also make the first two heads of your Letter. The 3d is this: "Christians are called to come out and separate themselves "from these ministers and the liberal body of christians, and "to withhold from them christian communion." Under these three heads, in their order, the remarks, which I have to submit to your consideration, will chiefly be arranged.

I. Does the Reviewer then assert, "That the ministers of Boston and the vicinity, and the great body of liberal christians, are Unitarians, in Mr. Belsham's sense of the word?" This you affirm; and to support the affirmation, you quote from the Review the following passages. "P. 267,

“ ‘We feel entirely warranted to say, that the *predominant* religion of the liberal party is decidedly Unitarian, in Mr. Belsham’s sense of the word.’ P. 254, “ ‘We shall feel ourselves warranted hereafter, to speak of the fact as certain, that Unitarianism,” meaning Mr. Belsham’s, ‘is the predominant religion among the ministers and churches of Boston.’ P. 271, ‘The liberal party mutilate the New Testament, reject nearly all the fundamental doctrines of the gospel, and degrade the Saviour to the condition of a fallible, peccable, and ignorant man.’ ” These passages I shall briefly consider; but not in the order in which you have chosen to arrange them: for I am not satisfied that it was quite right, to place the passage, quoted from the 267th page, in which there is no mention of Boston, before the one, quoted from the 254th page, and which refers to Boston directly. By this arrangement, with the help of a clause which you have thought proper to insert in the second passage, you have given to the three passages an aspect which, I believe you will readily perceive does not belong to them. I think it more fair to consider the passages in the order in which they stand in the Review, and to refer them severally to their proper connexions.

The first passage then is this; “ ‘We shall feel ourselves warranted hereafter, to speak of the fact as certain, that Unitarianism is the predominant religion among the ministers and churches in Boston.’ ” Is this, Sir, an assertion, “ ‘That the ministers of Boston and the vicinity, and the great body of liberal christians, are Unitarians, in Mr. Belsham’s sense of the word?’ ” You will please to observe, that no mention is here made of “the vicinity,” or of “the great body of liberal christians.” The remark is limited to Boston. Further, it is not said that “the ministers,” i. e. all the ministers, even of Boston, are Unitarians. The word “predominant” is evidently restrictive, and implies, that they were not all intended to be included. Further still, it is not said that *any* of the ministers of Boston are Unitarians, “in Mr. Belsham’s sense of the word.”

Does the *connexion*, then, warrant the broad construction, which you have given to the passage? The Reviewer pre-

sents a letter, written by Dr. Freeman of Boston to Mr. Lindsey of London, in which, after mentioning the "avidity" with which the "Unitarian Tracts," received by him from Mr. Lindsey, were extensively read, and the "impression which they could not fail to make upon the minds of many," Dr. Freeman says, "From these and other causes the Unitarian doctrine appears to be still upon the increase." "It flourishes chiefly in New England; but not much in Connecticut, Rhode Island, New Hampshire, or the western counties of Massachusetts. A few seeds have been sown in Vermont, and an abundant harvest has been produced in the vicinity of Boston, and in the counties directly south of it." Immediately in this connexion, the Reviewer says, "How far the sentiments in question have spread in Boston, has been often a subject of inquiry, and not unfrequently of debate. Mr. Belsham will inform us. If, says he, I am not greatly misinformed, divine worship, in many of the principal churches in Boston, is carried on upon principles strictly, if not avowedly Unitarian." The Reviewer then adds, "If any thing be lacking in Mr. Belsham's account, it is supplied in a letter to him, by William Wells, Esq. of Boston, a gentleman who, from his extensive acquaintance with books and men, and his distinguished zeal in the cause of Unitarianism, may well be supposed to give as exact a picture as any man living could draw." In this letter, which the Reviewer gives at large, Mr. Wells says, "Most of our Boston clergy and respectable laymen (of whom we have many enlightened theologians) are Unitarians."—"I may safely say, the general habit of thinking and speaking upon this question, in Boston, is Unitarian." Upon this the Reviewer remarks, "Such is the testimony in the case under consideration;" (viz. "How far the sentiments in question have spread in Boston;) and we presume that no man in his senses will hesitate for a moment to give implicit credit to such witnesses." Here comes the passage in question: "We shall feel ourselves warranted hereafter to speak of the fact as certain, that Unitarianism is the predominant religion among the ministers and churches of Boston."

Now, dear Sir, you will permit me to ask again, and to

ask very seriously, does the *connexion* warrant the broad construction which you have given to this passage? A construction which the *terms* of the passage, by themselves, certainly do not warrant; but upon which you have grounded the heavy accusation of falsehood. Is not the inquiry, in this connexion, limited expressly to Boston, to the exclusion most clearly of "its vicinity," and of "the great body of liberal "christians" elsewhere? Does not the Reviewer come to the conclusion, expressed in the debated passage, explicitly upon the ground of the adduced testimony of Mr. Belsham and Mr. Wells, in addition to that of Dr. Freeman? And does he not use the name Unitarian as unrestrictedly, as it is used by Mr. Wells himself, who must very well have known how Mr. Belsham would be likely to understand him? Upon what principles, then, of fairness or of truth, could we be justified in alleging, that the Review here "asserts, that the ministers of Boston and its vicinity, and the great body of liberal christians, are Unitarians, in Mr. Belsham's sense of "the word."

Before I dismiss this point, I must be permitted to ask further—Is not the Reviewer fairly borne out, in the declaration which he does make, respecting Boston, by the testimony upon which the declaration is made? Had he not a right to consider Dr. Freeman, Mr. Belsham and Mr. Wells, good authority in the case? Does he say more than what their testimony, particularly that of Mr. Wells, evidently warrants? Why then the heated indignation against *him*, while none is expressed against *them*? Why the strenuous endeavour to inflame and direct the resentments of the ministers and people of Boston against *him*, while *they* are treated with such exemplary forbearance?—Nay, rather, what occasion for any indignation, or resentment, either against him or them? Do you not, Sir, yourself mean to concede as much respecting Boston, as he asserts.—when you say, "The word *Unitarianism*, as denoting opposition to Trinitarianism, undoubtedly expresses the character of a "considerable part of the ministers of this town and its vicinity?" I dare not, indeed, affirm that you do; especially since you think it proper to add in the same sentence,—"and the common-

wealth." I have great satisfaction in the confidence, that Unitarianism is not the "predominant religion" among the ministers and churches of this commonwealth, and in the hope in God that it never will be. I do suppose, however, that you have great satisfaction also in the confidence, that it "is the predominant religion among the ministers and churches of Boston." But if so, what can be the reason that the true statement of the fact should produce such an unusual intensity of heat in your mind?

The next passage to be considered is this: "We feel entirely warranted to say, that the *predominant religion* of the liberal party is decidedly Unitarian, in Mr. Belsham's sense of the word." Does this "assert that the ministers of Boston and its vicinity, and the great body of liberal christians, are" of this character? Certainly, Sir, you will not hesitate to admit that, by itself, it does not. Does it then, when taken in connexion with the former passage? The former passage instead of helping to extend the sense of this, evidently serves to restrict it: for that passage plainly imports, that the ministers and churches of Boston are not all Unitarian, even in the general sense of the word. In each of these passages the restrictive word "predominant," is used; and in the latter passage, to give it the greater force of restriction, it is printed in Italicks. The utmost then, that can be fairly made out from the two passages together, of assertion in regard to the ministers and churches of Boston, is, that the majority of them are Unitarian, and that the greater part of the Unitarian majority hold with Mr. Belsham. All this might be true, and yet not half of those ministers and churches be Unitarians of this character. Yet you, my dear Sir, have emphatically represented that, in these passages, "the Review asserts, that the ministers of Boston, with the ministers of the vicinity, and the great body of liberal christians, are Unitarians, in Mr. Belsham's sense of the word;" and, under cover of this representation, have, in your haste, most earnestly accused the Reviewer of falsehood.

I have stated the *utmost* that can fairly be made out towards what you allege. But the passage under consideration admits of an interpretation, still less favourable to your allegation.

It may mean a "predominance," not in point of *numbers*, but in point of *influence*: and from the connexion this should seem to be its real meaning. After stating, "We feel entirely warranted to say, that the *predominant religion* of the liberal party is decidedly Unitarian, in Mr. Belshams's sense of the word," the Reviewer proceeds to shew the grounds upon which this declaration is made. He adduces the *Monthly Anthology*, the *General Repository*, and the *Improved Version of the New Testament*; publications which, as he supposes, were put forth and patronized by "the most prominent clergymen and laymen of the liberal party,"—men "who have the entire controul of the college." And, after saying what he judged requisite, respecting the Unitarianism of these publications, he concludes thus: "It appears, then, that the college and nearly all the influence of the liberal party through the medium of the press are in favour of Unitarianism. If individuals dislike Mr. Belsham as a leader; if they are not willing to be classed among his followers; let them declare their own opinions openly." Here then, we have evidently an explanation of what the Reviewer meant, by "Unitarianism, in Mr. Belsham's sense of the word, being the *predominant religion* of the liberal party:" that it is *predominant* in point of "influence," having "the most prominent characters" for its supporters and abettors. This, as you will readily acknowledge, might be true, though not one half, not one quarter of "the great body of liberal Christians" were Unitarians in this sense. And, Sir, that it is not actually true, nothing which you have advanced goes to shew.

What, however, the real truth in the case is, I will not take upon me to say: but I must say, that I do not see that the Reviewer may not have been perfectly honest in the opinion which he has expressed; perfectly honest in declaring that he "feels himself entirely warranted to say" what he does say. If his opinion is a mistaken one, yet an "unperverted mind" will admit, that the grounds on which it was formed have at least the appearance of some solidity; and it would require, it should seem no uncommon share of "the meekness of wisdom," no extraordinary effort of that "charity which hopeth all things," to refrain from charging him with falsehood.

One other passage, under this head, remains to be considered: "The liberal party mutilate the New Testament, reject nearly all the fundamental doctrines of the Gospel, and degrade the Saviour to the condition of a fallible, peccable, and ignorant man." This is the last of the three passages which you have cited to shew that the "Review asserts, that the ministers of Boston and the vicinity, and the great body of liberal christians, are Unitarians, in Mr. Belsham's sense of the word," and upon which you ground your principal accusation of falsehood. But is it here asserted, that all the individuals of the liberal party actually do the things, and all of them, which the party is said to do? Is this a fair interpretation of the passage? Or if it admits of this, does it fairly admit of no other?

The apostles, Sir, as you very well know, repeatedly charge the Jewish rulers and people, generally, even "the great body" of the nation, with having, "crucified and slain the Lord of life and glory." Yet, as you also know, but a very small part of that great body actually imbrued their hands in his blood. But some of them did; and of the rest, some more, and others less directly, consented to the deed. Hence they were generally involved in the guilt, and brought under the charge; and upon the great body, eventually, "wrath came to the uttermost." Such was the judgment of the apostles; and such the judgment of Him, whose throne is established in righteousness.—And, Sir, if among the liberal party, the things charged by the Reviewer are done; if some of the party do actually "mutilate the New Testament, reject nearly all the fundamental doctrines of the Gospel, and degrade the Saviour to the condition of a fallible, peccable, and ignorant man,"—and of the rest, some more, and others less directly, consent to all this; if, as a party, or as individuals of the party, they bear no decided testimony against these deeds, and do nothing effectually to secure, or to purge themselves from the guilt of them; then, is it not true, and right, and proper to say of the party generally, that they do these things? and will they not generally, with all who adhere to them, be held to answer for them at the bar of the righteous Judge?

But are not these things done:—I tremble, my dear Sir, while I put this question to your conscience:—tremble, not because I feel that I am doing wrong; but because I consider it a question of infinite solemnity.—It surely will not be denied, that “the New Testament is mutilated;”—it will not be denied, that “the Saviour is degraded to the condition of a fallible, peccable, and ignorant man;”—nor should it any more be denied, that “nearly all the fundamental doctrines of the Gospel are rejected.” I do believe you will yourself admit, that nearly all the doctrines are rejected, which by the venerable founders of the New England churches were held as fundamental;—which the great body of the Protestant churches, since the Reformation, have held as fundamental.

How great a proportion of the liberal party actually do all this, and to how great an extent the rest of them consent to it, I would be devoutly thankful, that I am not particularly concerned to determine. But I must seriously ask, whether, from the representations made in your Letter, were there no other means of judging in the case, there would not be most fearful reason to apprehend, that you and your liberal brethren generally have done but very little, to secure yourselves from the general charge, or, I must add, to purge yourselves from the general guilt?—It grieves me, dear Sir, to state, that in your Letter, you tell us, in so many words, that “to believe with Mr. Belsham is no crime:”—by which I understand, no sin,—no offence against God—against Christ—against the Gospel—against the cause and kingdom of truth and holiness.—No sin—no offence, to hold Christ to have been no more than “a fallible, peccable, and ignorant man;”—to discard those parts of the New Testament which assert his pre-existence, his miraculous conception, his divinity, and his atonement, as either spurious, erroneous, or extravagantly hyperbolic;—to deny that his death was an expiatory sacrifice for sin, that “we owe him any gratitude for the benefits which we are now receiving,” that “we have any reason to hope for his future interposition;”—to deny the inspiration of the Scriptures generally, and reject all the fundamental, all the peculiar doctrines of the Gospel!—You are also most studiously careful, most exquisitely tender, lest any “state-

ment you make should be considered, as casting the least reproach on those amongst us, who believe in the simple humanity of Jesus Christ;" and, of course, agree with Mr. Belsham, if not in all, yet certainly in the most material articles of his creed.—Most studiously careful, most exquisitely tender, lest you should wound their feelings, abridge their influence, or hinder their success in propagating their sentiments! And from other parts of your Letter, it would seem that such has been the uniform feeling, and conformable to it the uniform practice, not only of yourself, but of your liberal brethren in general.

Now, Sir, if such is the real fact, however small a proportion of the liberal party those may be, who actually do the things in question; yet is it not perfectly correct to say, generally, that the liberal party do them. And if so, where is the foundation for the serious charge of falsehood, so vehemently urged against the Reviewer?

You are pleased to say, (p. 7.) "The conduct of the Reviewer, in collecting all the opinions of that gentleman," Mr. Belsham, "not only on the Trinity, but on every other theological subject, in giving the *whole* collection the name of *Unitarianism*, and in exhibiting this to the world as the creed of liberal christians in this region, is perhaps as criminal an instance of unfairness, as is to be found in the records of theological controversy." Upon this permit me to ask,—Did you overlook that Mr. Belsham exhibits the opinions, thus collected, not as peculiarly his own, but expressly as the sentiments of the Unitarians generally? Have the goodness to observe his phraseology: "The Unitarians generally believe," &c. "The Unitarians maintain," &c. "The Unitarians disavow," &c. Was it not right for the Reviewer to consider Mr. Belsham, at present the head of the party certainly in England, as good an authority for determining what Unitarianism is, in the nineteenth century, as "Dr. Mosheim" or "Miss Adams?" and right also to give the people some distinct information on this subject? Is not the fact well known to you, that *Unitarianism* is a "name," not opprobriously given to that class of professed christians by their opponents, but eagerly claimed, and strenuously as-

serted by themselves? Are you not also perfectly aware, that after the denial of the essential divinity and the proper atonement of Christ, the descent to the lowest degree of Unitarianism is extremely easy, and often most rapid? That among those, who reject these primary doctrines, a peculiar brotherhood is at once established? And that any differences of sentiment, which may exist among them, are considered by themselves, from the highest to the lowest, as comparatively unimportant,—and are so considered also by their opponents, the Trinitarians, who regard the denial of these doctrines as subversive of the very foundations of the gospel? In what then consists the extreme criminality, with which the Reviewer is so warmly charged?

To conclude this head. You have accused the Reviewer of falsehood, in “asserting, That the ministers of Boston and its vicinity, and the great body of liberal christians, are Unitarians, in Mr. Belsham’s sense of the word.” I trust it has been made clear, that this accusation is unfounded: that he does not make the assertion which you allege that he makes; and that in what he does assert, in the passages cited by you, he is in part justified by your own concession, and in the rest borne out by the testimony of liberal gentlemen, and by principles of fair interpretation,—I frankly confess that I did regret, when I first read the Review, and I do still regret, that he had not expressed himself with more studious care, and more circumspect qualification. But for the heavy accusation, which you have preferred against him, and for the uncommon heat with which it is urged, I am utterly incapable of discerning any solid reason. “A man who is governed by christian principles, will slowly and reluctantly become the accuser of his brethren.” This sentiment, Sir, I quote from you with most hearty approbation. Near it, however, is a passage, which I quote with no common sensation of pain. “That he,” the Reviewer, “intended to deceive I am unwilling to assert; but the most charitable construction which his conduct will admit is, “that his passions and party spirit have criminally blinded “him, and hurried him into an act, which could have been “authorized only by the strongest evidence, and the most im-

“partial inquiry. The time may come, when he will view
 “this transaction with other eyes; when the rage of party
 “will have subsided; when the obligation of a fair and equita-
 “ble temper will appear at least as solemn as the obligation
 “of building up a sect; when misrepresentation, intended to
 “injure, and originating, if not in malignity, yet in precipi-
 “tancy and passion, will be felt to be a crime of no common
 “aggravation.”—God in mercy preserve me from the desire
 of applying this passage. But, my dear Sir, I must be per-
 mitted to intreat you, at some favoured moment, when pas-
 sion is hushed, when conscience is awake, when God and
 eternal things are in view, very seriously to consider, whether
 it might be applied with greater justice to the writer of the
 Panoplist Review, than to the writer of the Letter to the
 Rev. Mr. Thatcher.

II. In the second place you allege, that “the Review as-
 “serts, that the ministers of Boston and the vicinity, and the
 “most considerable members of the liberal party, ‘operate in
 “secret, intrust only the initiated with their measures; are
 “guilty of hypocritical concealment of their sentiments;
 “behave in a base and hypocritical manner, compared with
 “which Mr. Belsham’s conduct, rotten as he is in doctrine
 “to the very core, is purity itself.’—Such, you are pleased to
 add, “is the decent language scattered through this Review.”
 And in a note, at the bottom of the page, you throw together
 a number of severed phrases, selected from various parts
 and connexions of the Review, and represent them all as
 having been applied, by the Reviewer, directly to yourself
 and your clerical brethren generally of Boston and the vicin-
 ity, together with the most considerable members of the lib-
 eral party at large.

You are perfectly aware, Sir, how easy a thing it is to
 select from any book detached sentences and members of
 sentences, and so to arrange them as to give them a very
 different aspect and bearing, from what they have in their
 proper connexions. A more striking example of this kind
 I have seldom if ever witnessed, than the one which you have
 afforded in the instance now before us. Of all the quotations
 which you have made from the Review, as the basis of your

accusation under this second head, I think I may safely affirm, there is not one sentence, or scrap of a sentence, which appears in your Letter, with the same aspect and bearing as in the Review. When I first read them in your Letter, I felt, I confess, no small degree of excitement in regard to the Reviewer; and no little surprise that I could have read the Review without a similar excitement. But not less was my surprise, when, on turning to the Review, I perceived how very differently they there, in their proper connexions, appeared. My limits will permit me to present but a few of them here.

Speaking of the Stone Chapel, the Reviewer remarks, "We must say that the conduct of this society and their minister, in coming out openly and avowing their sentiments to the world, is vastly preferable to a *hypocritical concealment of them.*" The words in Italics are those which you quote, as being applied by the Reviewer to "the ministers of Boston," &c. but no such application of them is made by him.—Of a remarkable letter, written by a clergyman in this country to his friend in England, and published by Mr. Belsham, the Reviewer says, "the object of Mr. Belsham in publishing it was, to chastise the Boston clergy for their *cowardice in concealing their religious opinions.*" This expresses what the Reviewer supposed to be Mr. Belsham's opinion of the Boston clergy: and I presume, Sir, you will admit that he was warranted by the documents before him, in believing that such was Mr. Belsham's opinion, and such his design in publishing the letter. "The idea that a minister believes the truths of the gospel to be of infinite importance, and still conceals them, is *incompatible with either fidelity or integrity.*" Here the Reviewer expresses a general sentiment, without applying it; a sentiment which you, Sir, I doubt not, will readily acknowledge to be just.

My principal reason for selecting these passages, rather than others partly quoted by you, is, that they could be presented in their proper connexions and aspects in fewer words. These, however, will be admitted, I trust, as a pretty fair sample of the whole.

After making such quotations of detached sentences and scraps of sentences, as you thought proper, to shew that the Reviewer had charged you and your liberal brethren with a "hypocritical concealment of your sentiments," you proceed to notice the proofs upon which he rests this charge. These, as you state, are "a letter from Dr. Freeman, and the letter of Mr. Wells to Mr. Belsham." These letters you very dexterously despatch; excepting that you quote from that of Mr. Wells a particular passage, for the purpose of shewing "the method," as you say, "in which it is distorted by the Reviewer." This letter the Reviewer gives entire, and I believe correctly; but afterwards he does quote the passage in question with some variation. The quotation however is made, not, as you represent, for the purpose of supporting the charge of hypocritical concealment, nor in any connexion with this topick; but most plainly for the purpose of making out a list of epithetical and encomiastick descriptions, given by Mr. Wells of gentlemen of the liberal party; and the passage is so shaped, as to be the more conveniently arranged in the list. This alters the case materially. The Reviewer does not bring forward a passage in a "distorted" form, for the purpose of proving a charge of hypocritical concealment. But you have accused him of doing this; and to give the accusation the deeper impression, you utter yourself in the following remarkable terms: "An unperverted mind turns with sorrow and disgust from such uncharitable and disingenuous dealing; and why all this labour to distort what is so plain? the object is, to fix the character of knaves and hypocrites on a large class of christians and christian ministers. I might here be permitted to dip my pen in gall; but I do not write for those whose moral feeling is so dull, as to need indignant comment on practices like these."—And certainly, Sir, this passage of yours needs no "comment" of mine. I can only deplore and deprecate the state of mind from which only it could have proceeded.

I mean not, dear Sir, to deny that the Review does charge ministers, and perhaps others, of the party called liberal, with want of openness and clearness in avowing and explaining their sentiments; nay, with designed "concealment" and cul-

pable disguise. Nor will I dissemble that I have felt no little regret, that its language on this subject had not been in a style of less repulsive freedom and apparent asperity. I am fully aware that this is tender ground; and I feel most deeply the difficulty and the delicacy of the subject.

It does, however, appear to me very clear, that Dr. Freeman, Mr. Wells, and Mr. Belsham did suppose, and that in the documents on which the Reviewer principally relies as his vouchers, they do represent, that liberal ministers, and other liberal gentlemen have judged it proper, not to make ordinarily a free and full disclosure of their sentiments: that they have in fact thought it expedient to temporize. Whether, in this opinion of you and your brethren, those gentlemen are correct or not, you must have been apprised, that the opinion is not peculiar to them, but very extensively prevalent: prevalent, not among those only, whom you would consider your adversaries, but also among your friends. Hundreds and hundreds of times have I heard it uttered from various quarters, and with various expressions of approbation and disapprobation; and never, in any debate or conversation, as I recollect, have I heard the truth of it denied, or called in question. It seems indeed to have been received as an established, uncontested fact, that ministers of the liberal class were not accustomed to be unreserved and explicit in the public avowal and declaration of their sentiments. I confess to you, Sir, that I had so received it; nor did I ever imagine that in so receiving it, there was any thing injurious or uncharitable: for I did suppose that you and your liberal brethren held it as a maxim, founded upon reasons satisfactory to your own minds, that a degree of reserve and concealment, greater or less according to circumstances, was prudent, and justifiable, and praiseworthy. In this supposition I have been from time to time strengthened, by conversations with respectable individuals of the class, and not a little confirmed by what I have occasionally heard from the pulpit. I have now in very fresh remembrance some sentiments to this effect, delivered in a sermon which I heard at an ordination in Boston a few months ago; and in which the preacher very distinctly, and with considerable amplification, held forth

that, though in some places it might be well, and “contribute to the faith and virtue of the people,” for a minister openly and plainly to declare his sentiments, yet in other places it would not be prudent or proper: and in regard to this, the gentleman then ordained was affectionately and earnestly advised to regulate himself, according to the habits of thinking and feeling, the prejudices or freedom from prejudice, which he should find to prevail among his people.

Judge then, Sir, of my surprise, when I read, in your Letter, what I understood to be intended as an absolute denial, that any such reserve or concealment had been practised. After some reflection, however, I discerned, or thought I discerned, very clearly, the foundation of the apparent contradiction. The primary question between you and your opponents on this subject is, What is to be understood by a minister being open, clear, and faithful in the avowal and declaration of his sentiments? Upon this question there is evidently, between you and them, a real and material difference of opinion; and this difference is very manifestly the foundation of the apparent contradiction between you and them on the question, whether you are open, clear, and faithful, or concealed, indistinct, and unfaithful.

You are perfectly aware, that the ministers, called orthodox, are accustomed generally to preach out their sentiments without reserve, perhaps sometimes without prudence. They do not shun to declare unto the people all the counsel of God, as they understand it. They do not avoid preaching any doctrine which they find to be revealed in the word of God, either because that doctrine is mysterious, or because it is denied by some and doubted by others; but the very circumstance of its being denied or doubted, is with them a reason why they should be the more particular, and the more earnest, in shewing its truth, in obviating the objections against it, and in so instructing their hearers upon it, as to promote the increase of their knowledge and the establishment of their faith. These ministers, therefore, are accustomed to use great plainness of speech, endeavouring to make themselves well understood upon every subject: to let it be distinctly known what they believe concerning mankind, their fallen

state, their native depravity and practical sinfulness, their guilt and their condemnation; concerning Jesus Christ, his person, his offices, his atonement, and the nature and the way of the great salvation by him; concerning the Holy Spirit, his personal divinity, his official power and grace, and the nature and importance of his work in renewing, sanctifying, and sealing the heirs of salvation; and concerning the Gospel generally, its infinite importance as "the wisdom of God and the power of God" for the recovery of lost mankind, its doctrines, its precepts, and its institutions.—Accordingly these ministers are understood; and in general their people and others are left in no doubt as to what their sentiments are.—This, Sir, is what they understand by ministers being open, and clear, and faithful in the avowal and declaration of their sentiments.

It is otherwise, however, with you and your liberal brethren, as appears most clearly from your Letter.

In repelling the charges of the Panoplist Reviewer, you first make what would seem to be a *Confession of Faith*; and then proceed to shew the *manner* in which you and your brethren perform your ministry.—To your friend Mr. Thatcher you say, p. 7, "We both agreed that a majority of our brethren believe that Jesus Christ is more than man, that he existed before the world, that he literally came from heaven to save our race, that he sustains other offices than those of a teacher and witness to the truth, and that he still acts for our benefit, and is our intercessor with the Father. This we agreed to be the prevalent sentiment of our brethren." You then mention "another class of liberal christians, who, whilst they reject the distinction of three persons in God, are yet unable to pass a definite judgment on the various systems, which prevail, as to the nature and rank of Jesus Christ;" and "another class" still, "who believe the simple humanity of Jesus Christ."—"As to myself," you say, p. 12, "I have ever been inclined to cherish the most exalted views of Jesus Christ, which are consistent with the supremacy of the Father; and I have felt it my duty to depart from Mr. Belsham, in perhaps every sentiment which is peculiar to him on this subject."

Then, including yourself with your brethren of the three classes, you say, p. 13, "We are accustomed to speak of the Father "as God, and of Jesus Christ as his Son, as a distinct being "from him, as dependent on him, subordinate to him, and deriving all from him."

Such is your Confession of Faith; and for this Confession I, dear Sir, for one, most sincerely thank you; and hundreds and thousands of christians, I am persuaded, will thank you. It will serve to relieve us of much of the uncertainty, and much of the embarrassment, which, until now, we have felt in relation to you and your liberal brethren.—One great point is clear:—You hold Jesus Christ as "a being" entirely "distinct from God," and, like all other creatures, entirely "dependent."—Of course, you will, doubtless, not hesitate to acknowledge what I have certainly very great sorrow in stating, that the doctrines of *atonement by his death*, and *justification through faith in his blood*, as held by orthodox christians in all ages of the church,—together with all the truths and sentiments—all the powerful motives to repentance, faith, and holiness, depending on those cardinal doctrines, at once fall to the ground before you! Thus much is plain; thus far the matter is settled in regard to yourself, and in regard also to your liberal brethren, in so far as you were authorised to speak for them. To what extent you were thus authorised, I know not; but would devoutly hope, not to the extent which your manner of speaking would seem to import. Yes, Sir, most devoutly would I hope, that there are some among those whom you would wish to include in your liberal party, who will revolt from your statement; who will protest against being numbered with you; who will yet awake from the enchantment, more fatal than that of Armida, under the power of which they have too long been held.

Still, however, I find in the terms of your creed, a great want of clearness and precision; great indistinctness and ambiguity. What are we to understand by "Jesus Christ being more than man?"—by his "literally coming from heaven to save our race?" What is he more than man, and how does he save? What "other offices does he sustain than those of a teacher and witness to the truth?" Upon these, and oth-

er points comprised in your statement of the sentiments of the liberal party in general, you leave us in utter uncertainty. In your statement of your own sentiments, your ambiguity is not less remarkable. Were it not for what you say in another place, we should not know what you mean by "the supremacy of the Father:" whether a supremacy in office, such as Trinitarians admit; or a supremacy in nature, such as that of the infinite, independent Creator in relation to his finite, "dependent" creatures. "I have felt it my duty," you say, "to depart from Mr. Belsham, in perhaps every sentiment peculiar to him on this subject." Might not Dr. Priestley, with perfect truth, have said this? Is there a Unitarian in the world, even the closest follower of Mr. Belsham, who might not say the same? Undoubtedly there is no man living, who does not "depart from Mr. Belsham, in every sentiment which is *peculiar* to him." But what are the sentiments peculiar to Mr. Belsham? None of those certainly which are exhibited in his Unitarian creed.

Now, dear Sir, if such ambiguity, such want of distinctness and clearness, such apparent (I mean not to say dishonest) "concealment," is found in this Confession of your Faith; a confession, made on an occasion so urgent, when you seem to have felt yourself called upon for a publick and explicit declaration of your sentiments; would it not be reasonable to conclude, that on ordinary occasions you are certainly not less reserved, indistinct, and ambiguous: nay, that you have acquired a habit of expressing yourself on the doctrinal subjects of religion, in a manner not to be clearly understood. That such is the real fact, is manifest from the representation which you give of the *manner*, in which you and your liberal brethren perform your ministry.

The sum of this representation, which you have spread over several pages, is this: That you and your brethren studiously refrain from encountering the opinions of any of the various denominations of christians, who differ from you; and are accustomed "to urge perpetually those truths and precepts," which to be sure you call "great," "about which there is little contention." But what are those great truths and precepts, about which there is little contention, and which

you perpetually urge? Certainly not any of the primary, not any of the peculiar doctrines or institutions of the gospel: for not one of these can be named, about which there has not always been, about which there is not still, *great* contention. The doctrines concerning the Saviour's person and character, his priesthood and atonement, his offices and work;—the doctrines concerning the moral state of mankind,—regeneration by the Holy Spirit,—justification by faith,—pardon and eternal salvation through the merits of the one Mediator,—the resurrection of the body,—and the final judgment,—the “everlasting destruction of them that obey not the gospel:” all these, as you will readily admit, are subjects of continual and earnest contention among those who profess to be christians. These doctrines then, according to your own representation, you and your liberal brethren carefully refrain from bringing into discussion before your hearers: or, if you mention them at all, yet only in such a manner, as not to come into conflict or collision, with any who differ from you on these great and cardinal points.

But, Sir, set these doctrines aside, and what is then left of the Gospel of Jesus Christ? What is there left, but mere natural religion—called indeed, in this enlightened age, *rational christianity*?—If, in your preaching, these doctrines are kept out of sight, or treated only in a manner so general, so vague, so ambiguous, as not directly and manifestly to clash with any of the various and opposite opinions, held by professed christians respecting them; if you dwell “perpetually” on other topics; is it then strange, that your people and others are left in utter uncertainty, as to what you believe on these momentous points, and that you are considered as wanting in openness and clearness, and as practising reserve and concealment?

“In thus avoiding controversy,” you say, p. 15, “we have thought that we deserved not reproach, but some degree of praise for our self denial.” For myself, I had understood from the Scriptures, that it required christian “self denial,” not to shrink from an open avowal of our faith in the doctrines of the gospel, and from “holding forth the faithful word” in the face of opposition; but cordially to embrace

them, openly to confess them, and meekly and charitably; yet firmly and courageously, to "contend" for them. And you will pardon me, Sir, if I do not yet see that much "praise" is due for *your* "self denial". You tell us explicitly, that "to believe with Mr. Belsham is no crime." In your Sermon on Infidelity, you also say, p. 13; "For these," (reasons previously mentioned) "and other reasons, I am unwilling to believe, that infidelity has no source but depravity of heart, and that it can never be traced to causes which may absolve it from guilt. It must be admitted indeed, that you do not regard with quite equal kindness, those who believe in Calvinism; as is manifest from some very strong expressions of antipathy, and from your representation, than which I am grieved to say, I have seldom if ever seen a more "distorted" and injurious one, of their sentiments. Is it, however, a crime to believe in Calvinism? when, in your estimation, it is none to believe in the lowest Unitarianism,—and may be none to be an infidel. I presume that, notwithstanding the vehemence of your antipathy, you will hardly say it is. But if, in your estimation, error of all kinds is innocent, then where is your "self denial" in refraining from assailing it, and where your claim to "praise" for "avoiding controversy?"

There is still another point of view; and that a very serious one, in which your "self denial," and your claim to "praise," should not fail to be considered. If, indeed, to believe in error is "no crime," then to believe in the truth is no virtue. But, Sir, is it so represented in the word of God? Did Jesus Christ and his apostles conduct their ministry, and enjoin it upon others to conduct theirs, in the manner in which, as you represent, you and your liberal brethren conduct yours?

Jesus Christ says, "This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men have loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, and will not come to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd." Is not truth light, and error darkness? Does then the great Teacher from heaven here represent a belief in error to be no

crime?—a belief in the truth to be no virtue? Or does he limit the remark to infidelity?—which, in your Sermon before referred to, you allow may sometimes proceed from “vice.” What is his meaning when, in his commission to his apostles and ministers, he says, “He that believeth,” (in the truth undoubtedly) “shall be saved; he that believeth not shall be damned?” What is St. Paul’s meaning, when he says, “Because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved,—God shall send them strong delusion to believe a lie; that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness?” And St. Peter’s, when he says, “There were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction?” If this language sound harsh and unfashionable, I trust, Sir, you will have the goodness not to impute the fault to me; and that you will not, on account of any unpleasantness in the language, refuse to give attention to the momentous sentiment contained in it.

Did the apostles, then, studiously “avoid controversy?” Did they “seldom or never refer to any different sentiments embraced by other” professed “christians?” Never “attempt to refute” error? Never assail any “system which they did not believe?” or any “denomination that differed from them?” Did they refrain from preaching high and mysterious doctrines, lest they should “perplex, and needlessly perplex, a common congregation, consisting of all ages, capacities, degrees of improvement, and conditions in society?” Did they, “in compliance with a general system” of conduct, adopted by them, cautiously “exclude” from their preaching all controverted points, give up as unimportant and unprofitable every doctrine which any individuals, or bodies of professed christians, had ventured to deny or oppose, and “persuade themselves that the best method of promoting the holiness and salvation of mankind” was, “to urge on them perpetually those truths and precepts about which there was little contention?” Had they done so, possibly they might not have been “made the offscouring of all things,” and been exposed

to "deaths oft;"—but have "enjoyed singular prosperity," "found themselves respected by all classes of society," and been "distinguished by the eminent," and by those whom the world would call "the enlightened and the good." But did they not act upon an entirely opposite "system?" Did they not preach, "with much contention," a doctrine which was "to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness,"—a doctrine which was "every where spoken against?" Were not their Epistles all of them controversial, in a greater or less degree, and some of them almost entirely? Did they not zealously contend for sentiments which were denied and opposed,—and the more zealously in proportion as the opposition was more powerful and determined? Did they not earnestly "denounce" false doctrines and false teachers? warn the churches and all men against every prevalent error? and with the utmost solemnity say, "If we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you, than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed!"

Though the apostles were invested with an extraordinary authority, yet you will certainly admit, that, in their love and zeal for the truth, and (due allowance being made for change of circumstances) in the manner of performing their ministry, they are examples for all the ministers of Christ.—If then, my dear Sir, you and your liberal brethren have chosen to adopt "a general system" of conduct in the ministry, altogether different from theirs, we must entreat you not to think it strange, if there are some who cannot accord to you all the "praise," which you "have thought that you deserved." And notwithstanding the assurance and the pathos, with which you make your "appeal" to your people, you must not expect that the minds of all will be entirely relieved from the painful apprehension, that both you and your people may be under some deception; or from the distressing doubt, whether, at the appearing of the Lord Jesus, you will be able in his presence to say to them, "We take you to record this day, that we are pure from the blood of all men; for we have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God."

III. "The Reviewer," you say, "having charged us with 'holding the opinions of Mr. Belsham, and hypocritically

“concealing them, solemnly calls on christians who differ
 “from us in sentiment, ‘to come out and be separate from us,
 “‘and to withhold communion with us.’” Upon this topick
 your zeal rises to its utmost height. And it is, Sir, I confess, a subject most deeply interesting, and of a nature most strongly to excite the sensibilities of the soul. Here lies the danger. Upon this subject, it is extremely difficult to keep the passions still, and to attend with calmness, and meekness, and impartiality to the unadulterated dictates of reason and of scripture. Yet scarcely can another subject be named, which more imperiously demands to be considered with the most dispassionate, docile, and unbiassed mind. I am fully aware that there have been in all ages, that there are in the present age, rash and fiery zealots, who are never more in their element, than when engaged in strifes and contentions, sowing discord among brethren, and rending the churches of Christ piecemeal. Such spirits are not easily restrained and regulated, by the councils of the more temperate, and considerate, but not less conscientious, and firm, and faithful. I am no less fully aware, that there have been in all ages, that there are in the present age, zealots of a quite different character, but not less rash and fiery, who are always ready to raise the cry of bigotry, illiberality, fanaticism, and persecution, against every measure and attempt, though conducted with the best spirit, and with the utmost prudence and regularity, for maintaining the cause of truth, and promoting the purity, order, and prosperity of the churches.—It would be lamentable, Sir, indeed, should you descend from your proper elevation, and lend yourself, with all your weight and influence, to give a deeper tone, and a wider extent, to a cry so senseless and so unholy.

It is to be lamented, that on a subject of this serious and momentous kind, you should have thought it proper so entirely to dispense with argument, and with all the scriptural considerations which, in relation to this subject, so forcibly press themselves upon the conscience and the heart; and to indulge so freely in vague declamation, poignant invective, and fervid appeal to popular prejudices and passions. I know full well, and too many know, that this is the way to strike the minds of that great majority of mankind, to whom thought and reflec-

tion are irksome; the method best adapted for the support of a bad cause. I am fully aware of your advantages in this respect. But, Sir, a minister of Jesus Christ should esteem it a higher honour and a nobler achievement, to enlighten the understanding and correct the conscience of a single individual, than to rouse the passions and inflame the prejudices of thousands.—Declamation is always, for a very obvious reason, difficult to answer. Yours however, under the present head, is evidently bottomed on several *assumptions*, which I deem utterly inadmissible, and some of the principal of which I propose to consider.

In the first place, you manifestly assume, that the points of doctrine, upon which you and your liberal brethren differ from your opponents, are comparatively small and trivial; not “practical,” but speculative merely, and such as do not materially affect christian character.—I trust, Sir, it has been made plain, under the preceding head, that this ought not to be assumed. According to your own concession, the party in whose behalf you plead, generally deny the essential divinity of the Saviour, and hold him to be a being entirely “distinct from God”—entirely “dependent,”—in other words a mere creature.—But, Sir, between a being essentially divine, as by us the Saviour is held to be, and a mere creature however “exalted,” there is, as you will readily admit, an infinite disparity. The Saviour, then, whom you acknowledge, is infinitely different from Him whom we acknowledge and adore. *Your rock is not as our Rock, you yourselves being judges!* As your acknowledged Saviour is infinitely inferior to ours, so too are the offices and the work which you assign to him. You doubtless do not suppose, that by any mere creature, atonement could be made for the sins of an apostate world, of sufficient merit for the pardon, sanctification, and eternal salvation, of all who should trust in him; therefore, if you hold to atonement in any sense, yet unquestionably not in the sense of a proper propitiatory sacrifice. Upon this denial of atonement, must follow of course the denial of pardon, procured by the blood of Christ,—of justification solely through faith in him,—of redemption from eternal death unto everlasting life by him. Connected and, gener-

ally if not invariably, concomitant with the denial of these doctrines, is a denial of the Holy Spirit in his personal character and offices, and of the renewal of mankind unto holiness by his sovereign agency, as held by orthodox christians.

Now, Sir, are these small and trivial points of difference between you and us? The God whom you worship is different from ours; the Saviour whom you acknowledge is infinitely inferiour to ours; the salvation which you preach is immensely diverse from that which we preach. Though you call Jesus Christ master and Lord, and profess to believe in him and to love him; yet you do not, with the disciple who had long doubted, call him your LORD AND YOUR GOD; you do not believe on him for a salvation, meritoriously procured by his atoning blood, his vicarious merits; nor do you love him with supreme affection, or "honour him as you should honour the Father."

Are the doctrines then, about which we differ, merely speculative? Are they not *practical*, most vitally and essentially practical? Do they not go home to the heart directly, and claim an empire over all the affections and powers of the soul? Is not a doctrine which essentially concerns the object of our worship, practical?—when, if we are wrong in regard to the object of our worship, we can hardly be right in any part of our religion. Are not the doctrines, which affect directly the very foundations of our faith, practical?—When a true faith is the grand requisition of the gospel, and the vital principle of all holy practice, of all the works which are good and acceptable in the sight of God.

Hitherto, Sir, I have proceeded upon the ground of your general statement, and held more particularly in view your higher classes of liberal christians. But it is not to be overlooked, that you make your remonstrance against "separation," not in favour of those higher classes only, but equally in favour of the lowest:—of those who believe in the "simple humanity of Jesus Christ,"—who agree most nearly with Mr. Belsham; nay, Mr. Belsham himself, and those who agree with him entirely, were doubtless not intended to be excluded. You put in your earnest plea for the whole. The question, then, is a short one. Is not Mr. Belsham's gospel, as set

forth in this creed, *another gospel*, than that which Paul preached? If you are not willing to admit this; yet surely you cannot hesitate a moment to admit, that it is another, than that which is held by orthodox christians,—which is preached by orthodox ministers:—essentially different in every particular from the foundation to the top stone. One or the other of these schemes, then, must be what St. Paul denominates “another gospel,” and against which, and its abettors, he solemnly pronounces his apostolick anathema. The leading doctrines of Mohammed are not more diverse from the orthodox views of christianity, than are those which you would have us hold in our fellowship. The followers of Mohammed believe in Jesus Christ as a good man, and a great prophet; and are accustomed to regard him, I believe, with as high veneration, as are the lower Unitarians.

Does it not then infinitely behove both you and us, instead of uttering vague declamations, and impassioned appeals, most seriously to weigh the very forcible declarations of the ingenuous Mr. Belsham himself: “Opinions such as these can no more harmonize with each other, than light and darkness, than Christ and Belial. They who hold doctrines so diametrically opposite, cannot be fellow worshippers in the same temple. It was expedient that they should separate.”

Another of your evident assumptions is, that every separation between professed christians is unjustifiable; a criminal “schism,” the guilt of which is chargeable upon those who insist upon it as requisite. Schism, Sir, in the scriptural sense, I certainly hold to be no light matter. But what is schism in the scriptural sense? Is it not a rending, a disruption of *the body of Christ*, or of his true church? But are all who call themselves christians really members of the body of Christ? Do they all *hold the Head*? Do the scriptures teach this?—Do the scriptures represent that all separation from those who call themselves christians, all withdrawing of fellowship from them, is schismatick, is “heretical?” Do they enjoin upon the churches to hold in their fellowship all who profess to be christians, however corrupt in sentiment they may be?—Do they not on the contrary constantly insist on *belief in the truth*, as the very foundation of christian charac-

ter and of christian fellowship? and as solemnly warn the churches to keep clear of error as of other sin? as earnestly exhort them to be steadfast in the truth, as in that holiness of heart and practice, to which the truth is conducive and absolutely necessary?

If then, in obedience to the scriptures, and with the spirit, and in the manner, which the scriptures enjoin, churches that are sound in the faith, separate themselves from such professed christians as deny all the fundamental, all the peculiar doctrines of the gospel, are those churches justly chargeable with the guilt of schism and heresy? Is an orthodox church to be charged with schism and heresy, for withholding fellowship from a church professedly of the sentiments of Mr. Belsham's creed? or for excluding from its communion, in the regular way of christian discipline, individual members who professedly hold the same sentiments? Or are members of Unitarian churches to be charged with schism and heresy, if, in the meek and faithful spirit of the gospel, they ask for dismission, and regularly withdraw from a fellowship which they believe to be not that of the apostles and prophets?

How, indeed, is the fellowship for which you plead to be maintained? Upon this point you and your liberal brethren have taken care that we should be pretty fully informed. The orthodox churches must give up their creeds and covenants, their Psalms and Hymns and Doxologies; must cease to insist on, as important, the great doctrines which they now hold to be fundamental and essential to the christian faith; must exclude from their pulpits all mysterious and all controverted doctrines,—all that are not included in what is fashionably called liberal or rational christianity; must consent, in a word, to have their preaching and worship conducted on such principles, and in such a manner, as will not disturb the minds of liberal christians, or Unitarians of any class!—Is not this, Sir, precisely the way most distinctly marked out, and most strenuously insisted on, in your periodical publications, in your ordination sermons, and in all your discourses and conversations on this subject? If the orthodox ministers and churches will only consent to all this, the thing is done; all will be love, and peace, and fellow-

ship. That is, if they will consent to yield up as unscriptural or unimportant the doctrines of faith and the principles of worship, which they now hold most essential to christian character, devotion, and practice,—to hold it “no crime to believe as Mr. Belsham believes,” and, to worship as he worships; and thus cease to be orthodox, or in any respect materially different from those called liberal christians; all the difficulty will be removed, and the way will be open and easy for an established and permanent fellowship, between them and Unitarians of all degrees.—Yes, Sir: and if Unitarians would cease to be Unitarians, and become orthodox christians, the way would be equally unobstructed.

But here lies the difficulty. The orthodox ministers and churches will not consent thus to yield up their faith and their worship: and from the earnest and abundant labour and pains which you and your liberal brethren have employed, to bring them to these terms, it is manifest that, unless they will consent, you do not yourselves suppose there can be fellowship between you and them. Because they do not consent, you continually charge them with being bigotted, illiberal, uncharitable; and now seem disposed to charge them even with schism and heresy. But, Sir, if on account of their steadfast adherence to their faith and worship a separation and non-fellowship ensue, does it not deeply concern you, as well as them, very seriously to consider on which side the guilt will lie? Unquestionably, notwithstanding any thing which you have said of your own, or quoted from Dr. Campbell, it must lie on that side, which the Redeemer and King of Zion shall judge to have removed itself from the foundation of the apostles and prophets.

Your last assumption which I shall particularly consider is this: That it can be only from a bigotted, uncharitable and malignant spirit,—a “proud, censorious and overbearing temper,” that a separation can be proposed.—In this, as well as in what you say on the subject of schism and heresy, you seem to forget that your liberal brethren in England have not only proposed a separation, but have actually carried the proposition into effect; and that your heavy charges against your opponents here, recoil with all their force upon

your transatlantick friends. This, however, is no concern of ours.

We have been, my dear Sir, so long accustomed to hear the vehement charges of uncharitableness, illiberality, and bigotry, vociferated against us from your quarter, that we have ceased to be greatly disquieted by them. We "hear the angry thunder murmur at a distance, with as little concern as if it were the thunder of the pope, from whom it seems indeed to be borrowed."—The *reason* of these charges has been explained in the foregoing remarks. Your modesty and consistency in them are notable. You set out with asserting, that religion consists in charity; in charity, to be sure, in your own sense of the word; you then claim all this same charity as belonging to yourselves, and allow none of it to us: and thus, in effect, you deny that we have true religion. Yet the very reason why we are thus "denounced" as destitute of charity is, that we do not, as you allege, allow the genuineness of your religion. You may then deny the genuineness of our religion, and yet be most charitable; but if we entertain any doubt of the genuineness of yours, we must be utterly destitute of charity!

There is no word more abused than charity. Its scriptural meaning, as you very well know, is love; holy love to God and men: that love which is "the end of the commandment" and "the fulfilling of the law." In this sense it is indeed the essence—the sum of religion. Is it then a violation of the great law of love, for the friends of truth to decline communion with its rejecters?—We have nothing to do here with slight diversities of opinion; with differences about modes, or forms, or inconsiderable points of faith or practice. Our concern is with differences of a radical and fundamental nature; such as exist between orthodox christians and Unitarians of all degrees, even down to the creed of Mr. Belsham: for to this point you have yourself fairly reduced the present question.—Yes, Sir, the simple point here at issue is, Whether it be a violation of the law of love, for believers in the true gospel of Jesus Christ, to separate from believers in another and an opposite gospel? If yours is the true gospel, then ours is another; if ours is the true gospel,

then yours is another. In either case, the great question respecting fellowship remains the same.

You will certainly agree with me, that whatever tends directly to the maintenance and promotion of truth, cannot be incompatible with love to God, or love to men. Jesus Christ came into the world to bear witness to the *truth*. His apostles were appointed to be witnesses to the truth; which they were to propagate at every hazard, and which they, like their divine Master, finally sealed with their blood. His church was established to be "the pillar and ground of the truth." The great design of the christian ministry in all age is, to maintain and promote the truth. It is by means of the truth, that the glory of God is advanced in the world; and that mankind are guided into the way of peace, and sanctified for the kingdom of immortal glory. Love to God and men then requires, as a duty of primary obligation, that the churches of Christ, the ministers of the gospel, and all christians should do what they can for the promotion of truth.

We advance then to another question: would it conduce more to the promotion of truth for the believers in the true gospel, to hold fellowship with the believers in another gospel, than to separate from them?—We have seen in what way only this fellowship can be maintained. If it is to be maintained, the principal doctrines of the gospel must cease to be clearly preached; divine worship must cease to be conducted on principles distinguishingly christian; every principle or truth which is controverted, must be yielded up, as no longer to be urged or defended; and the friends of truth must conform to the abettors of error. All this must take place to a degree proportionate to the extension and closeness of the fellowship.—But is this, Sir, the way to maintain and promote the truth in the church and in the world? Is it not rather the way to extinguish at once the light of the ministry, the light of the church, the light of the gospel? to throw back the children of light into darkness and the shadow of death, and to leave the prince of darkness to triumph in an unlimited and undisturbed empire?—Would not the first and most certain effect be, the general prevalence of the opinion and the feeling,—already, alas! too

prevalent,—that truth is not worth contending for, that the great doctrines of the gospel are of very little importance? What then would be the consequence?—Shew me a man who cherishes this opinion, this feeling, and I will shew you one, who, far from going to the cross or to the stake, like the apostles and the host of holy martyrs, will make no sacrifice, no exertion, for the spread or the support of the truth: nay, one, who is already himself bound hand and foot with the silken cords of error, and whose “deceived heart hath turned him aside, that he cannot deliver his soul, nor say, Is there not a lie in my right hand?” And let this opinion and feeling generally prevail, and where shall we find those who will be “valiant for the truth upon the earth?”

“Whatsoever maketh manifest is light.” Would not the separation in question make manifest? Would it not serve to hold up the distinguishing truths of the gospel, and to shew their importance, to the greatest advantage and with the best effects? Would it not tend to wake up the slumbering multitude; to excite them to earnest and serious inquiry, and to prevent their perishing for lack of knowledge, “fast by the oracle of God?”

Is it then certain, that a proposal, that even an earnest call for this, can only proceed from a “malignant, proud, and censorious spirit?” Is it certain, that such a proposal or call might not proceed from the same spirit of holy charity, which ruled the hearts and fired the zeal of the apostles and faithful brethren of the primitive times, and of the distinguished ministers and confessors of the Reformation? the spirit which achieved such wonders for the honour of Christ and the salvation of men; but which in those illustrious periods, as it has been in all succeeding ages, was violently denounced, as the spirit of fanaticism, malignity, and pride.

Far be it from me to stand forth the advocate of a violent “system of denunciation and exclusion,” or of rash, disorderly, or uncharitable measures. I am fully aware that there is danger, great danger on this hand. And did it belong to me to assume prelatical dignity, and like you to give, *ex cathedra*, “admonitions” to my brethren, the sum of my advice and exhortations should be, Brethren, “let all things be done de-

cently and in order;"—"let all your things be done with charity."—The spirit of christianity is not to be violated; the rules of the gospel are not to be disregarded; the vastly interesting considerations, belonging to the subject on the one side and on the other, are not to be treated with lightness.

But, Sir, the differences which exist between the Unitarians and the orthodox christians are certainly of a nature, to demand the most serious and earnest attention. They concern, most directly and essentially, the glory of God, the honour of the Saviour, the welfare of the church, and the salvation of men. In comparison with these, the differences between Dissenters and Episcopalians, between Pædobaptists and Anti-pædobaptists, are matters of mere feature and complexion. Utterly in vain is the attempt to put these differences out of sight, to conceal their magnitude and momentous consequences; or by a raised cry of bigotry, illiberality, and intolerance, to divert the publick attention from them. They must and will be fearlessly discussed and seriously considered; and ministers and churches, professed christians and all others, must and will be brought to the solemn decision,—whether they will be for Christ or against him,—whether they will receive and hold fast his truth, or despise and reject it,—whether they will bow to his authority and trust in his grace, or refuse to have him to reign over them and condemn his salvation.

In the mean time, Charity, heaven-born Charity, must be allowed to weep and lament over the inroads of error and the desolations of Zion. Yes, Sir, charmed not at all with the so loudly chaunted praises of increased "light,"—abashed not at all by the disdainful sneers at imputed fanaticism,—she will weep—that her adored Lord is denied his divine honours, in the beloved city of our solemnities, where our fathers saw his glory, and delighted to celebrate his wonderful works of love and mercy.

Thus, Sir, have I attended, amid various unpropitious circumstances, to some of the principal things in your Letter. There are others which I certainly deem not unexceptionable, but which my design does not require, nor my limits permit me particularly to notice. If in any instance, I have misapprehended you, misrepresented you, or done any injus-

tice to you or to others, I can truly, I think, say it has been unintentional; and to correct any error, or redress any wrong, would afford me real pleasure.

I have done what I have felt to be a painful duty. The Lord pardon what is wrong,—and prosper what is right. And may the Spirit of truth guide us into all truth, and cause us to “see eye to eye,”—keep his people from falling, fill the churches with light and peace, and make his word “mightily to grow and prevail.”

I am, Rev. and dear Sir,

With sentiments of affectionate respect,

Your friend and brother,

SAMUEL WORCESTER.

Salem, July 15, 1815.

POSTSCRIPT.

I FIND I have part of a spare page, and have thought fit to occupy it with some smaller matters.

You say, p. 6, “Dr. Watts in the latter part of his life was decidedly an Unitarian.”—I am amazed that such an assertion could have been hazarded by you: an assertion, which Mr. Belsham, strongly desirous as he was to make out something in favour of his cause, from Dr. Watts’s “last thoughts,” durst not make. From what Mr. Belsham has presented on this subject, I should certainly conclude, even had I no other means of judging, and I believe every candid person would conclude, that the vague reports, so industriously circulated, of the Unitarianism of Dr. Watts, are most unsolidly founded, and most injurious to the memory of that great and good man. That he had a peculiar manner of explaining the mystery of the Trinity I do not deny; but, after no little attention to the subject, I do deny that there is any proof of his being a Unitarian; and am firm in the belief, that “he maintained to the last the true divinity of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”

In your zeal to strengthen your cause, you have numbered with Unitarians “Dr. Barnard;” I suppose the late Dr. Barnard of this town, whose name I would never mention but with particular affection and respect. I have great satisfaction in being able to assure you, that Dr. Barnard, but a few months before his death, explicitly and emphatically denied his being a Unitarian, and professed his belief in the essential divinity of Jesus Christ. If you wish for more proof to the same effect it can be produced.

Of “President Willard,” whom you also place on the same list, I am not able to speak with the same positiveness; but from information, on which I place great reliance, I believe you are not warranted in numbering him with Unitarians.

The manner in which you have denounced the Panoplist, demands, I think, your most serious reconsideration. To denounce with a spirit so violent, and upon grounds so unsolid, a publication of such well earned reputation, and such extensive usefulness, is to assume a responsibility of no ordinary kind.

I have seen your “Additional Remarks;” and you must permit me to say, that I think neither yourself, nor the President of Harvard College, nor any friend to you or him, will long regard them with much complacency. What you say on the subject of “ESPIONAGE,” is truly remarkable. I really did not know that there was any law of God or man, forbidding people to remark on *public performances*, or to *publish* what they hear delivered in *publick*. If I have transgressed, in mentioning what I have, of a Sermon, which I heard at an Ordination, I hope that my utter ignorance of the law will be admitted to due consideration.

S. W.

REMARKS

ON

THE REV. DR. WORCESTER'S

LETTER TO MR. CHANNING,

ON THE

"REVIEW OF AMERICAN UNITARIANISM"

IN A LATE PANOPLIST.

BY

WILLIAM E. CHANNING,

(Minister of the Church of Christ in Federal Street.)

SECOND EDITION.

BOSTON :

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1815.



REMARKS, &c.

By the advice of friends, whose judgment I respect, I have resolved to offer to the publick some remarks on the letter of Dr. Worcester, in reply to mine addressed to Mr. Thacher. They will be few in number, and as free as possible from personalities. When I understood that my letter was to be answered by Dr. Worcester, I felt and expressed great satisfaction. I regarded Dr. Worcester as a man of candour, moderation, and liberal feelings. I had reason to suppose, that as a minister, he would understand the feelings of his brethren, whose uprightness had been so wantonly assailed in the *Panoplist Review*, and whose influence and usefulness that publication was designed to destroy. I trusted, that whilst he would openly express disapprobation of some of my opinions, he would still appear in the honourable character of a peacemaker among christians. But I have been disappointed. His letter, though milder in language, breathes too much of the spirit of the *Review*. I feel, however, no disposition to retaliate. His letter, I will hope, is not to be considered as an expression of his general temper; and although it is too obviously designed to drive both me

and my brethren from the church and the ministry, yet, in obedience to that Master, who has forbidden me to render evil for evil, I have no desire to rob Dr. Worcester of his character as a christian, or a christian teacher.

My letter to Mr. Thacher is considered by Dr. Worcester as bitter and severe ; but called, as I was, to repel the charge of immorality brought against men, whose virtue and piety I know and honour, and to whom I am bound by ties of friendship and christian affection, I felt it a solemn duty to express what I deemed a virtuous indignation. I laboured however to temper displeasure with christian moderation ; and, on finishing my letter, my fear was, not that I had expressed an improper warmth, but that I should be considered as wanting sensibility to the injuries done to some of the best men in this community. I know, however, the many weaknesses and imperfections of my nature. I may have erred, for the provocation was great ; and I sincerely repeat the declaration with which I closed my letter, that for every departure from the spirit of the gospel, I implore the divine forgiveness. On the present occasion I am called to defend myself, rather than my brethren, and I am therefore at liberty to suppress the feelings which were awakened by many parts of Dr. Worcester's letter.

There is one particular in which I am indebted to Dr. Worcester, and I hasten to express my obligation. He has pointed out an inaccuracy in the language which I have employed to express the

charges contained in the Review. I have said, that the Review "asserts that the ministers of this town and its vicinity, and the great body of liberal christians, are Unitarians, in Mr. Belsham's sense of the word." It is true, that this passage may be understood as charging the Review with asserting, that *all the ministers of Boston of all denominations* are Unitarians of Mr. Belsham's school. I ought to have said, that the Review maintains—that the great body of liberal ministers in Boston and its vicinity, and of liberal christians, are Unitarians, in Mr. Belsham's sense of the word. I was probably led into this inaccuracy, by the manner in which the phrase "Boston clergy" is used in the Review; a phrase as broad as the "ministers of Boston," and which is employed by the Reviewer to designate the liberal ministers alone. I wrote too with a strong conviction, which is still in no degree impaired, that the Reviewer intended to fix on liberal ministers and christians, *considered as a class*, the sentiments of Mr. Belsham. I therefore made the statement with too little precision. I thank Dr. Worcester for detecting the inaccuracy, and if it has made a false impression on my readers, (which I think can very rarely have occurred,) I desire to express my sorrow for the wrong I have unintentionally done to the Reviewer.

This correction however affects very slightly the merits of the question. I still maintain, what I intended to maintain in my letter, that the Review was designed to represent the great body of liberal ministers in this town and vicinity, and the liberal party

in general, as Unitarians, in Mr. Belsham's sense of the word ; and that it charges these ministers and the leading members of the liberal party with artifice, hypocrisy, and base concealment. This statement of the charges contained in the Review, Dr. Worcester pronounces to be unauthorized and incorrect. There is a short way, and it is the only way, of settling this dispute. I beg every reader to examine the Review for himself, and to ask, from the impression made on his own mind, what is its obvious import and design. I offered but a few out of several passages which support the charges I have made. Let every man read for himself ; I ask no more. It is indeed possible, that by reading as a lawyer, who wishes to force every passage to say as little as possible, he may make the Review a very mild and harmless thing. I know too, that here and there some qualifying language may be found, under which the Reviewer, if he will stoop to it, may strive to take refuge. But the question is, not what a verbal critick, with a dictionary in his hand, may make out of the Review, but what are the impressions which readers at large receive from it, of the sentiments and character of the great body of liberal ministers and christians. This is the fair and established rule by which we are to judge of writings, and especially of those in which *moral character* is assailed. The question, and the only question, is, what will men of common sense and common feelings gather from this Review. On this point, I did not suppose that a doubt could exist. I never anticipated any

difference of construction. I thought it as impossible to err in regard to the obvious import and design of this publication, as to mistake midnight for noon. An attempt to prove that the Review was not written in English, would hardly have surprised me more, than the attempt which has been made to show that it does not convey the impressions I have stated. I very much suspect, from what Dr. Worcester has observed about our "temporizing" and "culpable disguise," that before he finished his letter, he understood the Review not very differently from myself. But enough has been said on this first head of Dr. Worcester's letter.

The next great object of Dr. Worcester's letter, if I *understand him*, is to convey to his readers the impression, that our mode of preaching is "concealed, indistinct, and unfaithful." This he attempts to prove, first from the statement which I made of the views of liberal christians in relation to the character of Jesus Christ. This statement, he says, is ambiguous and indistinct. That it is *general*, that it does not descend to particulars, I grant; but I deny that it is ambiguous, if considered, as it ought to be, in relation to the object for which it was made. Does not Dr. Worcester perfectly know, that it was simply designed to repel the charge of the Reviewer, that we are Unitarians in Mr. Belsham's sense of the word? Was it necessary, that in such a statement every question should be met and answered, which may possibly be started in relation to our sentiments? Have not I, in my turn, an equal right to reproach

Dr. Worcester with ambiguity and indistinctness? Has *he* any where told us, which of the many, very many explanations of the *Trinity* he and his brethren embrace, and are determined to impose on us as the term of christian communion? Has he told us the precise scheme of *atonement* which he adopts, or which of the many definitions of *faith* he has selected? How easily might this reply be extended? But I pass to the next consideration.

The next proof of our preaching in a “concealed, indistinct, and unfaithful manner,” is derived from the account which I have given of our general style of preaching. I did think that this account was too simple to be misunderstood. My statement was plainly this—that we labour to preach the truth, to preach whatever we clearly discover in the word of God; but that, in doing this, we generally avoid references to opinions which we do not receive, and never hold up those christians who differ from us to censure or contempt. According to this statement, we evidently preach the whole counsel of God, as far as we understand it. But Dr. Worcester, passing over this account, has selected a passage, in which I observe, that “we urge perpetually those great truths and precepts about which there is little contention, and which have an immediate bearing on the temper and life.” From this passage he infers, that we can urge none of the “primary and peculiar doctrines” “and institutions of the Gospel, because about all these there has been great contention.” To this I answer, first, that I have never understood, that there has been much contention about the “real *precepts*” of

the gospel, not even about those which have been most habitually disregarded. Christians, satisfied with dismissing these from their lives, have retained them in their systems. Even the bitterest persecutors in the church have never disputed the precepts of "loving their neighbour as themselves," and of "doing to others as they would have others do to them." On the contrary, they have insisted, that burning, beheading, defaming and denouncing those, whom they called heretics, were perfectly consistent with christian love, and were even bright expressions of evangelical charity!—It may next be observed, that the common disputes about the "great *doctrines*" of the gospel have not related so much to their truth and importance as to some inferiour points connected with them. For example, there has been much debate about the benevolence of God, whether it forms his whole moral character, and his highest spring of action, or whether it be subordinate to wisdom or rectitude; but all parties have agreed that God is benevolent. In the same manner, many have disputed about the omnipresence of God, whether his substance be extended through infinite space, or whether he be present only by his knowledge and power to every portion of space. But all have agreed that God is omnipresent. In like manner christians have disputed about the precise way in which Christ's death has an influence on our forgiveness; but that it has a real and important influence on forgiveness, almost all unite in asserting. Once more, Christians have never been weary with disputing on the mode

and extent of spiritual influences ; but, with very few exceptions, all maintain that these influences are real and are promised to our prayers. Let no one then say, that we preach no primary or peculiar doctrines of Christianity because we insist perpetually on principles in which the different classes of Christians generally concur. Such principles, we sincerely believe, form the very substance and glory of the gospel. They shine with a clear and unsullied splendour. We are deeply impressed with their truth, their supreme importance, and their sufficiency to salvation ; and therefore we urge them with unwearied importunity, with zeal and affection. It is very possible that Dr. Worcester will go on to object, that, according to this very account, our preaching must be very general, vague, wanting in precision, and therefore unfaithful. The answer is short. If we are indeed general and vague in our representation of the truths of the Gospel, it is *because we are faithful*, because we dare not be precise above what is written, because we stop where the Scriptures seem to us to stop, and because we have a very deep and sorrowful persuasion, that our religion has been exceedingly defaced and corrupted by the bold attempts of theologians to give minute explanations of its general truths, and to cramp it with the fetters of systematick precision. We tell our hearers, that God sent his Son to die for us, exalted him to be our Prince and Saviour, and ordained him to be judge of the quick and dead, and never think it necessary or faithful to fill up the outline of Scripture, by adding,

that the *Son, who was sent*, was the *very God* who sent him, or by speculating on the infinite evil of sin, and on the necessity of an infinite atonement, in order to illustrate the fitness of such a mediator. Thus, then, we preach. Whether our preaching be nothing more than the inculcation of “natural religion,” let our hearers determine.

Dr. Worcester, to render our mode of preaching odious, asks, if the “apostles avoided controversy,” and never “attempted to refute error,” &c. &c. We think the answer very obvious. In the first place, we wonder that any can confound the situation of ministers in a christian country, where the gospel has long been known and acknowledged, with the situation of the apostles, who preached a new religion which the multitude derided and opposed, and which their new and ignorant converts were continually corrupting with Jewish and heathen mixtures. We sincerely believe, that the great principles, for which the apostles contended, are now received with little dispute in Christian communities, and we conceive that the great business of a minister is to urge those truths in their primitive simplicity on the hearts and consciences of men, instead of making them subjects of controversy.

There is another important remark on this point. We do not pass sentence like apostles on many subjects of controversy among christians, for this very plain reason—that we are *not* apostles. We are, what we labour never to forget, uninspired and fallible men, and we are apt to distrust ourselves, when persons of intelligence and piety see cause to

differ from us in the interpretation of Scripture. We dare not preach like apostles on points which have perplexed and divided men of the profoundest thought and the purest lives ; and we know from the genius and leading principles of Christianity, that these points are not, and cannot be essential to salvation. We dare not imitate the bold and positive language, in which the darkest doctrines are sometimes urged as undoubted and essential; and in which the sentence of excommunication is pronounced on serious inquirers after truth, by some who discover no superiority of intellect or virtue.

I now come to a part of Dr. Worcester's letter which, if I were to consult my feelings rather than my sense of duty, I should pass over in silence. I refer to his insinuation, that we have adopted a style of preaching opposed to that of the apostles, because we wish to avoid the sufferings which those holy men encountered, and wish to secure the favour of the world. Dr. Worcester's language is sufficiently soft and guarded, and by certain rules of criticism it may perhaps be proved to mean little or nothing. But I am accustomed to judge of writings, which affect moral character, by the impression which they make on the mass of readers; and the impression produced by Dr. Worcester undoubtedly is, that we are guilty of base compliances, and of shunning to declare the whole counsel of God from regard to human applause. I have already intimated, that I am not disposed to notice the sarcasms, verbal criticisms, and half-humorous expressions of regard which are scattered

through Dr. Worcester's letter, and directed against *myself*. But reproaches cast on my friends and brethren, on men whose piety and virtues entitle them to respect, I shall always repel, let them come from what quarter they may. Dr. Worcester owes it to himself, to cast away these dishonourable weapons. It does not become *him* to strengthen the hands of those, who are assailing the honest reputation of his brethren—Besides, is it very clear, that we, above all other ministers in this country, are swayed and corrupted by human opinion? Is it not notorious, that we have espoused an unpopular cause? Is it not the boast of the Reviewer, that from Connecticut to Georgia all “orthodox christians” deny us communion? Is it not notorious, that beyond a narrow sphere our names are loaded with reproach? It is true, we receive marks of affection and respect at home, far, far beyond our consciousness of desert. But do aspiring men confine their views to their homes? And is it not a fact, that unwearied pains are employed to rob us even of this limited esteem, to alienate from us our friends and societies? If we indeed prefer applause to principle, why is it, that we do not accommodate our language to the system of our opponents, adopt a few popular phrases, call ourselves Trinitarians, on the ground of our believing in the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, and thus turn from us, (as we easily might without giving offence to our hearers) the torrent of reproach and denunciation.—It is a little remarkable, that gentlemen, who, as they boast, have all the colleges of the

country on their side with one solitary exception, who have at their command literary honours, seats in conventions, in general assemblies, and in the largest religious associations, should take credit to themselves for self-denial, and for preaching unpopular truth, and should lay at our door, as peculiarly ours, the sins of compliance with the prejudices and passions of mankind. I make this remark, not from any desire to cast back the charge of Dr. Worcester on himself or his friends, but simply with the view of shewing the inconsistency of the insinuations by which the reputation of my brethren is to be blasted.

I now come to what appears to me the third great object of Dr. Worcester, in his letter. I refer to his attempts to render our sentiments odious, and to justify those who, on account of our sentiments, would exclude us from the christian church. To render our sentiments odious, he again and again intimates, that Unitarians, *of course*, reject all the great and distinguishing doctrines of the gospel, particularly the doctrine of atonement by Christ's death. Is it possible that Dr. Worcester has not read so common a writer as Dr. Samuel Clarke, the most popular perhaps of all Unitarian writers, and in whose works the doctrine of atonement, as commonly held, is insisted on with great frequency and force? Has he not learned from so common a book as "Bible News," that many Unitarians sincerely believe, that the efficacy of Christ's death in obtaining forgiveness must be inexpressibly greater upon their system, than upon the system of the Trinitarians, which

makes the sufferings of Jesus nothing more than the sufferings of a *man*. There is one sentence of Dr. Worcester on this subject which amazed me. He says to me, "you will, doubtless, not hesitate to acknowledge, what I have certainly great sorrow in stating, that the doctrines of atonement by Christ's death, and justification through faith in his blood, AS HELD BY ORTHODOX CHRISTIANS IN ALL AGES OF THE CHURCH, fall at once to the ground before you." Astonishing assertion! If I were not assured that Dr. Worcester is a man of respectability, I should be tempted to say, Astonishing hardihood of assertion! What! does Dr. Worcester really believe, that I will acknowledge, *without hesitation*, that I reject these or any other doctrines, as they were held by "orthodox christians," *in the age of Christ and of his apostles*, or as held by "orthodox christians" *in any age of the church*? I sincerely believe that this strange assertion is not to be ascribed to bad intention, but to haste and inadvertence. I regret however that a sentence, so adapted to awaken popular passions, should have escaped from his pen. I am not disposed to protract this controversy by stating what I conceive to be the prevalent sentiments of liberal christians on the subject of Christ's mediation. I will only say, that had Dr. Worcester known them better, he would have spoken on this, as on some other subjects, with much greater caution.—Before leaving this head, I would protest against Dr. Worcester's habit of fastening on his opponents the consequences which

seem to him to follow from this system. This practice is unfair and injurious, and has betrayed Dr. Worcester into misrepresentation. Suppose that I, availing myself of this expeditious way of settling the opinions of others, should make a collection of the inferences which seem to me to flow from the doctrine that God is the author of sin, and suppose that I should publish this collection to the world as the creed of those christians, by whom this doctrine is received; would they not reproach me as a libeller? But I have no disposition to fasten this or any other bad name on Dr. Worcester.

Another method adopted by Dr. Worcester for rendering our sentiments odious, is this. It is urged, that our sentiments lead us into an entire indifference to christian truth; that we believe all error to be innocent; that we consider belief in the truth as no virtue; and that we thus set aside those passages of scripture in which the highest importance is attached to this belief. This objection is founded on our extending the name and privileges of christians to the lowest Unitarians, who hold some sentiments, from which, as I stated, we generally shrink with aversion. Now I deny that any indifference to truth, or any contempt of those passages which enjoin belief of the truth, is implied in this extension of our charity. I indeed very readily grant, that "belief of the truth," in the ordinary acceptation of that phrase, does not seem to us a virtue; and for this, among other reasons, that were it so, Satan might boast of higher virtue than any saint on earth.

Satan believes and trembles. The *faith* to which salvation is promised in scripture, seems to us to reside in the heart much more than in the understanding. The true believer is distinguished not by clearness and extent of views, but by a "love of light," a "love of the truth," originating in a sincere desire to "do the will of God." We wonder that Dr. Worcester did not discover this obvious principle in the very passages which he has quoted to condemn our liberality towards the erroneous. "This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men *loved darkness rather than light*, because their *deeds were evil*." "Because they *received not the love of the truth*, God shall send them strong delusion, that all might be damned, who believed not the truth, but had *pleasure in unrighteousness*." This love of divine truth, this honest, unprejudiced, obedient mind, we highly venerate and always enjoin as essential to salvation. But we know that this love of truth is consistent with the reception of many errors. We know that the apostles, during the life of their master, possessed this temper in a sufficient degree to constitute them his followers, and yet they grossly misunderstood some of his plainest and most important declarations. We believe too that at the present day, many in every christian country are placed in circumstances, almost if not quite as unfavourable to a clear understanding of the gospel, as the apostles were under the ministry of Jesus. From considerations of this nature, from a knowledge of the amazing power of education

and other circumstances over the opinions of every mind, and from a fear that we, as well as others, may have been swayed and blinded by unsuspected infelicities attending our condition, we are very unwilling to decide on the degree of truth, which is required to the salvation of every individual, or to say that the errors of an apparently sincere professor of christianity are inconsistent with a pious character. In our judgment of professed christians, we are guided more by their temper and lives than by any peculiarities of opinion. We lay it down as a great and indisputable principle, clear as the sun at noonday, that the great end for which christian truth is revealed, is the sanctification of the soul, the formation of the christian character ; and wherever we see the marks of this character displayed in a professed disciple of Jesus, we hope, and rejoice to hope, that he has received all the truth which is necessary to his salvation. Acting on this rule, we cannot exclude from the church the lowest Unitarians who profess subjection to Jesus Christ. Of this class we have known or heard of individuals, who have breathed the genuine spirit of their master ; who have discovered a singular conscientiousness in all the walks of life ; whose charity has overflowed in good deeds ; whose wills have been resigned in affliction ; and who lived as seeking a better country, even a heavenly. Such men we have not dared to exclude from the christian church, on the ground of what seem to us great errors, any more than to exclude the disciples of Calvin ; whose errors we also

deeply lament, but whose errors are often concealed from us by the brightness of their christian virtues.

We are not conscious, that by this liberality we at all oppose those passages of scripture, in which great stress is laid upon belief of the truth ; for we are convinced, from laborious research into the scriptures, that the great truth, which is the object of christian belief, and which in the first age conferred the character of disciples on all who received it, is simply this, that Jesus is the Christ, or anointed by God to be the light and saviour of the world. Whenever this great truth appears to us to be sincerely acknowledged, whenever a man of apparent uprightness declares to us his reception of Jesus in this character, and his corresponding purpose to study and obey his religion, we feel ourselves bound to give him the hand of christian fellowship, and to leave it to the final judge to determine how far he is faithful in searching after the will of his Lord. This duty of searching, and of searching with humility and with a single and fearless regard to truth, we constantly inculcate; and we sincerely believe, that in this way we approve ourselves friends of truth much more sincerely, than if we should aim to terrify and prostrate the minds of our hearers, by threatening them with everlasting misery, unless they receive the peculiar views of the gospel, which we have seen fit to espouse.

There is a part of Dr. Worcester's letter, according to which our charity towards the lowest Unitarians not only proves our indifference to truth, but

makes us partakers in their sentiments and deeds. Because we bear "no decided testimony against them," and because we are called by the same general name of "liberal christians," Dr. Worcester thinks that we were properly confounded with them by the Reviewer. I wonder that Dr. Worcester did not perceive that this argument was a two-edged sword, and might do equal execution among friends and foes. It is well known that the old fashioned Calvinists in general regard the "new divinity" of the Hopkinsians with great horror; but it is also true that "a peculiar brotherhood is established" between these two classes of Christians in New-England. They both by mutual consent take shelter under the name of "orthodox." The Calvinists here have never, as a party, borne testimony against Hopkinsian peculiarities, have never "purged themselves from the guilt of them," but walk with Hopkinsians on as friendly terms as we do with the lowest Unitarians. According to Dr. Worcester, then, the guilt of these false and horrid peculiarities lies at their door. They esteem "errour no crime," and "belief of the truth no virtue." The old fashioned Calvinists of New-York, however, have been more careful to "purge themselves from this guilt." The clergy of that city have almost without exception united in publick declarations, that Hopkinsianism, "is at war with the philosophy of the human mind, with *common sense*, and with the *word of the living God*. Such sentiments, in whatever connexion they may be taught, by whatever names they may be re-

commended, ought to be exposed and *reprobated* in the most decided manner." "They nothing doubt that christians, upon sober research, will find Hopkinsianism to be in *some very material points* 'ANOTHER GOSPEL' indeed." "By whatever name or title they, *i.e.* Hopkinsians, may be distinguished, they have departed, in many points, from the confessions of faith and the form of sound words adopted by the reformed churches, and *it is time they were known*, and A LINE OF DISTINCTION DRAWN." "It is a duty of all the Lord's people to contend earnestly for the faith. It is especially incumbent on those who are set for the defence of the gospel, to descry approaching danger, and should an angel from heaven preach another gospel to *denounce and resist* him." "These writers," *i. e.* Hopkinsian, "have gained a reputation far beyond what *nonsense and impiety* should acquire for a divine." "They are preparing the way for a more extensive diffusion of *infidel principles and even of atheism* in our country." See the recommendations prefixed to Ely's contrast between Calvinism and Hopkinsianism by Dr. Smith, Dr. Romeyn, Dr. Mason, Dr. Livingston, &c. &c. It seems, then, that others, as well as Dr. Worcester, claim the privilege of sitting in judgment on their brethren. The measure he would mete to others, is ready to be measured to himself again, and it is very possible, that with all his orthodoxy he may soon suffer under the very same sentence, which he passes so rashly on one third of the clergy of this state. Such are the first fruits of a faith, which works by uncharitableness and not by love.

But Dr. Worcester has not merely aimed to make our sentiments odious. I would to God, that he had stopped here. He has openly taken part with those who insist, that on account of our sentiments we ought to be denied Christian fellowship, and to be driven from the church as unworthy the christian name. This is infinitely the most important part of Dr. Worcester's letter. All the rest is comparatively trifling. I exceedingly regret that Dr. Worcester has not brought this subject fully and fairly before the publick. He has mixed together topicks, which ought not to be confounded, and has thus, I trust unintentionally, blinded his reader. His readers will imagine, that the separation to which Unitarians object on the part of Trinitarians is nothing more than the separation which Dr. Worcester says has been made by Unitarians themselves in England, a *separation in worship*, a separation produced by the adoption of prayers, hymns and doxologies accommodated to their peculiar sentiments. This view of the subject has given Dr. Worcester a field for his powers of humour and sarcasm. But this is not the true question. No. No. It is something more solemn than this. The question is this, Whether those persons, who cannot receive as a truth of revelation the doctrine that the one God is three distinct persons, shall be denied christian fellowship, or in other words, shall be denied the name and privileges of Christians. This was the proposition of the Reviewer, and with the sincerest sorrow I find that to this Dr. Worcester accedes.

To him I did look for a healing spirit, for an example of forbearance, and moderation. But he has solemnly and publickly given all his influence to the opinion, that we and all who agree with us on the subject of the Trinity are to be disowned by the church of Christ. The obvious import of the concluding part of his letter (and it is the obvious import, and not a strained and circuitous interpretation which I regard) may be thus expressed. "Every man who cannot admit as a doctrine of Scripture, the great doctrine of three persons in one God, which I and other orthodox Christians embrace, believes an opposite gospel, rejects the true gospel, despises the authority of Jesus Christ, is of course a man wholly wanting in true piety and without christian virtue; and may in perfect consistency with christian love be rejected as unworthy the name of a christian." I confess I do shudder at hearing from a frail and fallible creature this tremendous sentence passed on men of the profoundest understandings, of the purest lives, and of unwearied devotion to the study of God's word; and passed on these men, because they cannot receive a doctrine, which bears the strongest marks of inconsistency with that fundamental truth of all religion, the unity of God, and which for ages has perplexed and distressed the mind of almost every reflecting christian. Was Dr. Worcester sensible of the solemn responsibility which he took on himself, when he advanced the sentiments in the close of his letter? Is he confident that no Antitrinitarians are pious men? Is he sure that he has not been labour-

ing to drive from the christian fold the friends of Jesus and the heirs of salvation?

Before Dr. Worcester took so solemnly this ground, it became him to inquire most seriously into the doctrine of three persons being one God, to weigh well the arguments of those who oppose it, and to observe with candour their tempers and lives. Nothing but the deepest and most deliberate conviction that this doctrine of the trinity is indisputably true, that it is accompanied by evidence which renders the disbelief of it inexcusable, and that the scriptures insist upon it as an indispensable mark of a true believer, could have justified him in condemning as strangers to christian virtue men of established integrity, who profess with seriousness to revere the Saviour, and to make his instruction the rule of their faith and practice. I appeal to the conscience of Dr. Worcester, and I beseech him to ask himself with sincerity, whether he possesses this deep conviction, and whether it is the result of calm, patient and extensive research. If he shall answer in the affirmative, I then respectfully call upon him in the name of those on whom he has shut the door of the christian church, to "produce his reasons," to shew the ground of his confident persuasion that this doctrine is undoubtedly true, and that the Scriptures demand the acknowledgment of it as necessary to the character of a pious christian. I also beg him to state with all possible precision, what particular view of the trinity it is necessary for us to receive in order to salvation, and in what language our faith must be

expressed. I do not ask him to discuss these points in a letter to me or to any opponent. The controversy is not to be despatched in a few pages, nor ought it to be mingled with any personalities. Let it take another form, the form of general discussion. I promise Dr. Worcester that his arguments shall be seriously weighed, and I trust that those on whom he has past the sentence of exclusion will not be backward to defend what they deem the truth, or to vindicate their claim to the name of christians.

The principal argument which Dr. Worcester offers in favour of the proposed separation is, the greatness of the differences between Trinitarians and Unitarians. I sincerely regret that these differences are so studiously magnified, whilst the points of agreement between these classes of Christians are studiously overlooked. Dr. Watts and Dr. Doddridge have left us a better example. Trinitarians and Unitarians both believe in one God, one infinite and self-existent mind. According to the first, this God is three persons; according to the last, he is one person. Ought this difference, which relates to the obscurest of all subjects, to the essence and metaphysical nature of God, and which common christians cannot understand, to divide and alienate those who ascribe to this one God the same perfections, who praise him for the same blessings, who hope from his mercy the same forgiveness, who receive on his authority the same commands, and who labour to maintain the same spirit of devotion to his will and glory.—Ac-

according to Trinitarians, Jesus, who suffered and died on the cross, is a derived being, *personally* united with the self-existent God. According to the Unitarians, he is a derived being, *intimately* united with the self-existent God. Ought this difference, which transcends the conception of common christians, to divide and alienate those, who love the same excellent character in Jesus Christ ; who desire to breathe his spirit and follow his steps ; who confide in him, as perfectly adapted to the work which he was sent to accomplish ; and who labour to derive just conceptions of his nature from his own instructions ? The differences between Trinitarians and Unitarians are very often verbal. As soon as Trinitarians attempt to shew the consistency of their doctrine of three persons with the divine unity, their peculiarities begin to vanish, and in many of their writings little or nothing is left but one God acting in three characters, or sustaining three relations, and intimately united with his son Jesus Christ. Ought distinctions so subtle and perplexing, to separate those, who love the same divine character, and respect the same divine will.

Dr. Worcester, however, seems disposed to widen the breach between these classes of believers. He says, the Saviour “ whom you acknowledge, is infinitely inferior to ours.” I answer—we believe that GOD saves us by his son Jesus Christ, in whom he dwells, and through whom he bestows pardon and eternal life. A higher Saviour we do not know, and cannot conceive. But Dr. Worcester does not stop here. He says, “ The God whom you worship is

different from ours." To this I answer, as others have answered before, that I with my brethren worship "the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, who hath glorified his son Jesus," whom Peter preached, Acts iii. We worship "the *God* and *Father* of our Lord Jesus Christ," to whom Paul "bowed the knee." We worship that God, whom Jesus in his last moments worshipped, when he said, "*Father*, into thy hands I commend my spirit." We worship that God, to whom our Lord directed us, when he put into our lips these affecting words, "Our *Father*, who art in Heaven." We worship that God, of whom our master spoke in these memorable words, "the hour cometh, and now is, when the *true worshippers* shall worship the *Father* in spirit and in truth." Dr. Worcester speaks of a different God; but we can renounce ours for no other. This worship we are persuaded, is a spring of purity, joy and hope, and we trust that it will prove to us a source of unfailing consolation amidst the trials, reproaches and rude assaults of the world. But I must stop. The points of dispute between Unitarians and Trinitarians cannot be treated with any fairness within the narrow compass of a pamphlet, and I wish not to discuss them in connexion with the present controversy, which primarily relates to the moral character of the great body of liberal christians.

Dr. Worcester has laboured to shew, that *charity*, instead of forbidding, encourages and requires Trinitarians to exclude Unitarians from christian fellow-

ship, because charity commands us to promote truth, and truth is promoted by this system of exclusion. But let me ask, why is truth to be promoted? Not for its own sake, but for its influence on the heart, its influence in forming a christian temper. In what then does this temper consist? very much in candour, forbearance and kind affection. It follows, that any method of promoting truth which is unfriendly to these virtues is unchristian; it sacrifices the end to the means of religion. Now let me ask, whether the practice of rejecting as ungodly men those, who differ from us on subtle, perplexing, and almost (if not altogether) unintelligible doctrines, be not obviously and directly opposed to the exercise and diffusion of candour, forbearance, kind affection and peace. Has it not actually convulsed the church for ages with discord and war? The right of denouncing those who differ on such doctrines, if granted to one christian, must be granted to all; and do we need the spirit of prophecy to foretell the consequences, if the ignorant, passionate and enthusiastick, who form the majority of every community, shall undertake to carry this right into practice? The idea, that a religion which is designed for weak and fallible mortals of all classes and capacities, and which is designed to promote unity, peace, candour, and love, should yet make it our duty to reject as wholly destitute of goodness, every man, however uniform in conduct, who cannot see as we do on points where we ourselves see little or nothing, appears to me the grossest contradiction and absurdity. If this be

christianity, we may say any thing of our religion more truly, than that it is a religion of peace. A more effectual instrument of discord was never devised. Charity then does not command the Trinitaria to exclude his Unitarian brother. Charity commands us to use mildness and persuasion ; to open our eyes to the marks of virtue in those from whom we differ ; to beware of ascribing error to a corrupt heart, unless the proof be striking ; to think modestly of ourselves, and to drive from our minds the conceit of infallibility, that most dangerous error which ever crept into the church of Christ.

I have now finished my examination of the principal parts of Dr. Worcester's letter. There is one general remark to be applied to the whole. It does not appear, no, not in a single line, that Dr. Worcester ever brought home to himself the case of his injured brethren, ever imagined himself in their situation, and inquired how, under such circumstances, he would himself have felt and acted. Suppose for example, that in the Christian Disciple a review had appeared, solemnly charging on that class of ministers to which Dr. Worcester belongs, sentiments which they generally disapprove, and charging them with propagating these sentiments by artifice and base hypocrisy. Would no sensibility have been excited ? Would not Dr. Worcester have regarded the author of this Review with strong indignation ? Suppose then that Dr. Worcester, impelled not merely by a regard to his own usefulness, but by friendship, by christian affection, by a regard to

what he believed the interests of the church, had written such a letter as mine to Mr. Thacher ; and suppose that I, after reading this letter, had come before the publick, and without one expression of sympathy towards Dr. Worcester and his brethren, had attempted to uphold the Reviewer, and had even declared, that the large body of christians condemned by that writer were virtually enemies to Christ, without piety and without hope. What would Dr. Worcester have felt? Might he not, in an unguarded moment, in the warmth of virtuous indignation, have called me a defamer? Would he not have said, that I was aiming a blow at what was dearer to him than life, at his christian character, and his usefulness as a christian minister? Now I ask, would this conduct have been a crime in me, and is it a virtue in Dr. Worcester? Let that gentleman bring the case home to himself, and he may view his letter with less complacency than he now does. He certainly will not wonder at the feeling which I have expressed, or think me instigated by the worst of passions in the remarks which I now offer to the publick.

I now bid farewell to this controversy, as I hope, for ever. This I do, not because I hope to escape reproach by silence, for I know that the full measure of reproach is prepared for me ; not because I shrink in any degree from the cause which I have laboured to defend ; but because I fear, that a controversy of this nature between christian ministers will produce impressions unfavourable to the cause of piety ; be-

cause I believe, that it tends to awaken unfriendly feelings in the community, and that it ought therefore to cease as soon as the interests of truth will admit ; because I fear, from observations on my own heart, that it is not favourable to the best affections in those who are immediately engaged in it ; because I am persuaded, that it will never end, if I resolve to answer every new pamphlet and every fresh charge ; because a continuance of it will be inconsistent with the regular duties of my profession, and with more useful pursuits ; and lastly, because the most important topicks in the controversy cannot be thoroughly and fairly discussed in the form of short publications abounding in personalities.—I am willing to relinquish the privilege of saying the last word, and shall of course be condemned by those, who consider the last word as a sign of victory. With respect to the direction, which the publick mind will take on this subject, it is not easy for a man of retired habits and of very limited connexions to determine. To God I cheerfully leave the event. Believing in his providence, assured that the gospel is his care, and looking forward to his promised kingdom, where the animosities, reproaches, divisions, and poor contentions of this world will never enter, I desire and hope to maintain in every condition an equal mind, and to attain some portion of that peace which, as men cannot give, so they cannot take away.



NOTE.

IN the preceding remarks I have wished to observe something like method, and to hold the attention of the reader to the great points of the controversy. For this reason, and I hope for a still better reason, I have passed over several of Dr. Worcester's courteous sarcasms, minute criticisms, and appeals to popular feeling. But there are some particulars, not undeserving attention, which were excluded by the order which I proposed, and which I have therefore reserved for a note.

I did not notice Dr. Worcester's criticisms on my interpretation of the Review, because I have not met a single individual, who has expressed one doubt as to the import and design of that publication. But there is one of Dr. Worcester's criticisms which ought not to be overlooked. I refer to the attempt which he has made to defend the Reviewer from the charge of a very criminal mutilation of Mr. Wells' letter. If the reader will turn to my letter to Mr. Thacher, page 12, he will see the mutilation stated at length. Dr. Worcester alleges, that the passage was varied by the Reviewer, merely that it might be inserted conveniently in a list of encomiums, passed by Mr. Wells on liberal gentlemen. To this defence I reply, first, that the mutilated part of the passage, as it stands in the Review, is not an encomium, and could not have been introduced as possessing that character. In the next place, it is very singular, that the passage could not have been properly "shaped," without excluding those words which most forcibly vindicate the

Boston ministers from the charge of concealment. But thirdly, it is still more remarkable, that the passage could not have been properly shaped without printing the last clause *in italicks*, a clause which, when thus printed, entirely changes the meaning of the sentence. How these italicks help to give the right shape to the quotation, is not obvious to a common reader, nor has Dr. Worcester thought proper to inform us.

Dr. Worcester asserts that I "claim all charity" for myself and my friends, and "deny it all" to our opponents, and thus "deny that they have true religion." God forbid. If any part of my letter is marked by this exclusive spirit, I ask forgiveness of my injured fellow christians. I did think that I expressed a very opposite temper. I certainly felt it.

Dr. Worcester says that I have given a very distorted view of Calvinism. I should rejoice to think so. It is a painful thought, that such dishonourable views of our merciful Father in heaven, as I have ascribed to that system, should find admission into a single human mind. I represented Calvinism, however, precisely as I had been accustomed to understand it; and, what is more, since reading Dr. Worcester's letter, I have consulted Miss Adams' "View of Religions," to correct my errors on the subject; but still I am met by the same heart-chilling doctrines; Calvinism still wears the same frowning aspect; still seems to me a dreadful corruption of true Christianity. That my letter contains any reflections on Calvinists, as Dr. Worcester intimates, cannot be true. I indeed think that, as a class, they have defects which may be traced to their system; and some of their number seem to love none of the principles of Geneva so well as those which lighted the flames for Servetus. But as a body I have always regarded them with respect, and it has been my happiness to witness among them very bright examples of christian virtue. If Dr. Worcester shall ask, how characters so excellent can have grown up under so corrupt a system, I will answer him, when he can explain how a Fennelon and a Pascal were formed in the most corrupt church in christendom.

Dr. Worcester says that I have unjustly represented Dr. Watts as a Unitarian. I hope that Dr. Worcester does not mean to avail himself of an ambiguous word. Does he mean to deny that Dr. Watts was an *Antitrinitarian*, that he rejected the doctrine of *three distinct persons in God*? Dr. Watts believed, that the Holy Spirit was not a divine person distinct from the Father, but the active power of God, to which personal properties were *figuratively* ascribed in Scripture. That at least I have always regarded as his opinion; and if so, *one* of the three persons has certainly disappeared from his system. Dr. Watts, indeed, believed that Jesus was properly a divine person, and he often speaks of him as God-man. But he believed that this divine person had a *beginning*, and was formed by the union of the Father with the human soul of Jesus; and still more, he believed that Jesus was divine, because the *Father* and not a *second divine person* dwelt in him; in other words, Jesus Christ, according to this system, is to be acknowledged as the supreme God, because he is the *Father* himself united with a human soul; all his divinity is derived from the indwelling Father. Have we here then a second divine person, *distinct* from the Father, yet equal with him in *eternity* and every other glory? This view of Dr. Watts' system is confirmed by his particular friend Dr. Doddridge who has given substantially the same account in his lectures; and by Dr. Samuel Palmer, the disciple and admirer of Dr. Watts. I have not one doubt, that Dr. Watts was a Unitarian, in the sense of believing that God is one person, in opposition to the Trinitarian doctrine of three persons, a doctrine which he calls a "strange and perplexing notion." Dr. Worcester says, that my assertions respecting Dr. Watts are bolder than Mr. Belsham *dared* to make. Mr. Belsham's assertions, which Dr. Worcester pronounces more cautious than mine, related to a very different point from that which I maintained. Mr. Belsham was anxious to prove, not that Dr. Watts was a Unitarian in the broad sense of that word, but a believer in the *simple humanity of Jesus Christ*. Did not Dr. Worcester know this fact? and was he ingenuous in ascribing to me greater boldness than to Mr. Belsham, when our objects were entirely different?

With respect to Dr. Barnard, I have satisfactory proof that he believed God to be one person, and was accordingly a Unitarian. From his language respecting the "essential divinity of Jesus Christ," I infer that he accorded in some degree with Dr. Watts or Sabellius. He did *not* believe the Son to be a divine person, distinct from the Father, and possessing equal divinity. His views on these subjects, like those of many good men, were not very precise. Had he been obliged to select a system, it would have been Dr. Samuel Clarke's. The same remarks may be applied to President Willard.

Dr. Worcester speaks of my "denunciation" of the Panoplist. I did not refer, as the connexion will shew, to the *general* discussions and statements of that work, of which I know very little; but to its representations of the views and character of liberal christians. On this point I have the same conviction as before, that the Panoplist is entitled to no credit.

Dr. Worcester has quoted for my benefit the following text of scripture, "There shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them." Dr. Worcester says, that this language may "sound harsh and unfashionable," and he "trusts" that I "will have the goodness not to impute to him the fault." Sarcastick compliments seem to me not to belong to so serious a subject. Trifling here is quite out of place. I ask Dr. Worcester's attention to this passage as rendered according to Dr. Campbell. "There shall be false teachers among you, who shall privily bring in *destructive sects, or divisions*, denying or renouncing the Lord who bought them." Believing as I do, that the gospel is characterized by a benevolent and pacifick spirit, and that the Lord has bought us for this very end, that we should serve him in love, I cannot conceive of a surer mark of a false teacher of the gospel, than the introduction of *destructive divisions* into the church, and I am persuaded that one method of denying or renouncing the Lord is, to divide his followers, and to oppose the spirit of charity and peace. I shall not insult Dr. Worcester by asking him to "have the goodness not to impute to me the fault of this unpleasant and unfashionable"

comment, but I recommend it to his serious attention. I mean not, however, to intimate that any teachers of the present day are to be placed on a level with the false teachers condemned in this passage. These, as appears from the whole chapter,* were monsters of iniquity, covetous, lewd, adulterers, seditious, slanderous, given up to the basest lusts. They excited divisions for mercenary purposes, and built up a sect by encouraging lasciviousness and the grossest sensuality. Thank God, this race has passed away, and I could not without great guilt confound with them any class of ministers with whom I am acquainted. I believe that the fomenters of division among us are generally actuated by an injudicious zeal, by passions which they mistake for piety, and by prejudices which are reconcilable with a regard to God and duty, not by the motives which governed the profligate wretches referred to in the text.

It is one of my great offences with Dr. Worcester that I "put in my earnest plea" for the christian character of those, who believe in the "simple humanity of Jesus Christ." It is some consolation to me, that I have the excellent Dr. Doddridge as a partner in this guilt. The name of Dr. Lardner is I presume familiar to most of my readers. No man in modern times has rendered greater service to the cause of christianity. Dr. Lardner was a decided believer in the simple humanity of Jesus. Having published a volume of Practical Sermons, he sent them to Dr. Doddridge, who acknowledged the favour in a letter, from which the following extracts are made. "I esteem the valuable present you were so good as to send me, as a memorial of the learned, pious and generous author." "Be assured that though I am not able to express it as I would, I do actually feel a deep and constant sense of your goodness to me, and, which is much more, of your continual readiness to serve the publick with those distinguished abilities which God has been pleased to give you, and which have rendered your writings so great a blessing to the christian world. And I heartily pray that they may be yet more abundantly so, for promoting

* 2 Pet. ii.

“the cause of piety and virtue, of christian principles, and a
 “christian temper. In the interpretation of particular texts
 “and the manner of stating particular doctrines, good men and
 “good friends may have different apprehensions; but you
 “always propose your sentiments with such good humour, mo-
 “desty, candour and frankness, as is very amiable and exem-
 “plary; and the grand desire of spreading righteousness, bene-
 “volence, prudence, the fear of God, and a heavenly temper
 “and conversation, so plainly appears, particularly in this
 “volume of sermons, that were I a much stricter Calvinist than
 “I am, I should love and honour the author, though I did not
 “personally know him.” Such was the language of Doddridge,
 a “disciple whom Jesus loved,” to the excellent Lardner.
 Blessed be God, who in every age raises up witnesses to the
 true spirit of christianity, and who opposes such examples as
 that of Doddridge to the narrow, exclusive and uncharitable
 spirit of the world.

I will conclude this note with earnestly desiring christians
 to obtain, if possible, some accurate ideas of the most important
 point in the present controversy. Let them learn the distinc-
 tion between Trinitarianism and Unitarianism. Many use
 these words without meaning, and are very zealous about
 sounds. Some suppose that Trinitarianism consists in believ-
 ing in the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. But we all
 believe in these; we all believe that the *Father* sent the *Son*,
 and gives to those that ask, the *Holy Spirit*. We are all Trini-
 tarians, if this belief is Trinitarianism. But it is not. The
 Trinitarian believes that the One God is *three distinct persons*,
 called Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; and he believes that
 each of these persons is equal to the other two in every perfec-
 tion, that each is the only true God, and yet that the three are
 only one God. This is Trinitarianism. The Unitarian be-
 lieves that there is but one person possessing supreme divinity,
 even the Father. This is the great distinction; let it be kept
 steadily in view.—Some christians have still more vague ideas
 on this subject. They suppose that Trinitarians think highly
 of Jesus Christ; whilst Unitarians form low ideas of him, hardly

ranking him above common men, and therefore they choose to be Trinitarians. This is a great error. Some Unitarians believe that the Father is so intimately united with Jesus Christ, that it is proper, on account of this union, to ascribe divine honour and titles to Jesus Christ. Some Unitarians deny that Jesus is a creature, and affirm that he is properly the Son of God, possessing a divine nature derived from the Father. Some Unitarians, who assert that Jesus is a creature, maintain that he is literally the first-born of the creation, the first production of God, the instrumental cause by whom God created all other beings, and the most exalted being in the universe, with the single exception of the infinite Father. I am persuaded, that under these classes of high Unitarians many christians ought to be ranked who call themselves orthodox and Trinitarians. In fact, as the word Trinity is sometimes used, we all believe it. It is time that this word was better defined. Christians ought not to be separated by a sound. A doctrine which we are called to believe, as we value our souls and our standing in the church, ought to be stated with a precision which cannot be misunderstood. By the Trinity, I have all along understood the doctrine, that *God is three persons*. If it do not mean this, it means nothing, and those christians who take shelter under this word, without adopting this sentiment, are acting, I fear, a dishonest and ungenerous part. They distinguish themselves by a name from christians with whom they substantially agree, and whom they are bound to honour and love as brethren. To those persons, who wish to understand better the nature of the Trinitarian controversy, I would recommend Dr. Price's five "Sermons on the Christian Doctrine," and Rev. Noah Worcester's three Tracts called the Trinitarian Review. This subject has of late been ably discussed in a "Reply to Wardlaw's Discourses," by Rev. James Yates of Glasgow, Scotland. "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good."



SECOND LETTER

TO THE

REV. WILLIAM E. CHANNING,

ON THE SUBJECT OF

UNITARIANISM.

.....
BY SAMUEL WORCESTER, D. D.

PASTOR OF THE TABERNACLE CHURCH, SALEM.
.....

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LETTER.

REV. AND DEAR SIR,

A REASON of my choosing to communicate my thoughts, on your Letter to the Rev. Mr. Thacher, in a Letter addressed to you, rather than present them to the publick in any other form, was, that I bore towards you very sincere affection and respect, and wished, while performing a most painful duty, assiduously to preserve and cherish these sentiments. In this disposition I was careful that you should receive a copy of the Letter, accompanied with a note of fraternal courtesy, before the pamphlet was published for sale. Though I have not met with reciprocal attention in either of these respects, and have only found, at the Bookseller's, "Remarks" on my Letter, addressed "to the publick;" yet, animated still with the same sentiments as at first, and impressed with some new considerations, I choose to address what I have to offer in reply to your Remarks, in a second letter to you.

There are cases in which a fair statement of the truth, even with the kindest spirit and in the mildest terms, will almost certainly be considered by those on whom it bears, as severe if not bitter. This infelicity I deeply felt when writing before, and now, I can assure you, not less deeply feel. I sincerely regret the necessity of exhibiting truths, which will be painful to you; and it will be my care not to render them additionally painful, by any asperity or unfairness in the manner of exhibiting them. I find that your Remarks are almost entirely personal; but in replying to these "personalities," it will be no object with me to "defend myself," any further than seems necessary for the vindication of the cause which I espouse. My earnest desire is, that attention may be fixed, not upon me or upon you, but upon the important questions of general concern in discussion between

us. These questions merit attention; and neither we, nor others on either side, ought to be weary of attending to them, until they be well understood, and correctly decided.

In reading your Remarks, my first care was to find, if you had made it appear that I had, in any instance, misapprehended or misrepresented you, or done injustice to you or to others. In two or three instances you intimate that I have misrepresented you, and in three or four that I have wronged you by unjust imputation. To these I will briefly attend.

I stated that "in the terms of your creed," as given in your Letter, there is "a great want of clearness and precision; great indistinctness and ambiguity." You "deny" the correctness of this representation. I have deliberately re-examined the subject, and my views of it remain unaltered. It was not because your "statement," or creed, did not "meet and answer every question which may possibly be started in relation to your sentiments," that I pronounced it indistinct and ambiguous; but because, as I attempted to shew, it was not clear and unequivocal upon the points most directly in question: and I am perfectly content to submit it to the judgment of candid men on either side, who will attentively read what you have written and what I have written, whether in this instance I am guilty of misrepresentation. To them also I would refer, whether, as I have never been charged with concealing my sentiments, I am open to the "reproach, in turn," of ambiguity and indistinctness, in regard to any statements which I made, or which it was incumbent on me to make.

You seem to intimate, p. 8, that I have misrepresented your account of the manner in which you and your liberal brethren perform your ministry. This also I have reexamined: and only desire that my representation and argument may be fairly compared with your statement, and with the general, notorious, and undisputed facts to which I referred.

You say, p. 12, "I refer to his insinuation, that we have adopted a style of preaching opposed to that of the apostles, BECAUSE WE WISH TO AVOID THE SUFFERINGS WHICH THOSE HOLY MEN ENCOUNTERED, AND WISH TO SECURE THE FAVOUR OF THE WORLD."—I did indeed suppose that "the favour of

the world" which you enjoy, and of which you speak in your Letter with so much complacency, was to be attributed, at least in part, to "a style of preaching" widely different from that of the apostles. But that you have adopted this style *for the sake of such a boon*, I have no where "insinuated." Throughout my Letter, I studiously confined myself to the statement and suggestion of facts and principles in "language" which you acknowledge to be "sufficiently soft and guarded," and without arraigning or impeaching, in a single instance, intentions or motives. Had you duly attended to this character of my Letter, you would have spared yourself the pain of many of your remarks.—And here, Sir, I enter my protest against the "rule" of construction which you have professedly adopted, and according to which you seem to think it right to assume the "*impression*," which any writings happen to make, as the criterion of their real meaning.

P. 15, you quote from my Letter the following passage: "You doubtless will not hesitate to acknowledge what I have certainly very great sorrow in stating, that *the doctrines of atonement by Christ's death, and justification through faith in his blood*, as held by orthodox christians in all ages of the church,—at once fall to the ground before you." Upon this you exclaim, "Astonishing assertion!"—"What! does Dr. Worcester really believe that I will acknowledge *without hesitation*, that I reject these or any other doctrines, as they were held by ORTHODOX christians *in the age of Christ and his apostles*, or as held by ORTHODOX christians *in any age of the church*." Really, Sir, I did rely on your candour, that you would not refuse to me the common and established use of the word ORTHODOX, and that you would not, by giving to this word a different sense, evade a notorious matter of fact, and avoid an ingenuous concession. Admit the word orthodox in its general acceptation, and in the sense in which you must have understood me to use it; and I am still confident you will not *deny* what I supposed you would *not hesitate to acknowledge*.

In this connexion you say, "Before leaving this head, I would protest against Dr. Worcester's habit of fastening on his opponents the consequences which seem to him to follow

from their system. This practice is unfair and injurious." I am not conscious of this "habit." I do not think it right for any one to fasten upon his opponents the consequences which seem to him to follow from their system; when they themselves disavow those consequences, or do not generally admit them. Against such a practice, I would cordially join with you in the most earnest and decided "protest." But the present is a very different case. It is a well known fact, that those who deny the essential divinity of Jesus Christ, do also generally, if not universally, deny the doctrines of atonement and justification by faith, as held by orthodox* christians. Your reference to Dr. Samuel Clark and to Bible News is utterly irrelevant. Dr. Clark did not deny the essential divinity or the eternal existence of the Son of God; and hence was not under the necessity of denying the doctrine of atonement. Though, nevertheless, I believe Dr. Clark's views of the Trinity erroneous, and to have been solidly refuted by Dr. Waterland; yet it is not with Dr. Clark, or with any who do not deny the essential Divinity of Jesus Christ, that I am concerned in the present discussion. My concern is with those who hold Jesus Christ to be only a creature; whether they hold him to be "the first production of God, the most exalted being in the universe with the single exception of the infinite Father," or a mere man, fallible and peccable like other men. Whatever terms may be employed to set forth the dignity of Jesus Christ, and to represent him as being almost equal to the supreme Father, it is nevertheless certain that, if he is only a *creature*, he is infinitely inferior to the Father; and is no more to be compared with God, no more to be represented as approaching in dignity and glory to him, than any other creature, even *man that is a worm*. Before Him whose name is JEHOVAH all creatures are as nothing. This the highest holy creature will the most deeply feel, and, feel-

*I still use this word in its common acceptation, to denote those christians, who hold the doctrines of Christ's true divinity, atonement for sin by his death, and justification by faith alone in him; in opposition to those who deny these doctrines, and whom I call *Unitarians*, not because I think them justly entitled to appropriate this name, but because it is the name by which they choose to be called.

ing this, would shudder at the ascription to him of the names, and titles, and honours ascribed to Jesus Christ. As it respects the doctrine of atonement then, and other evangelical doctrines connected with it, it matters not whether Jesus Christ be regarded as a mere man, or as a creature of super-angelick dignity. If he is a mere creature, whatever rank you choose to assign to him, his death could not have been of the nature, or of the meritorious efficacy of a propitiatory sacrifice for the sins of the world. It is therefore with perfect consistency, and a matter "of course" and necessity, that those who hold him to be a mere creature, *do actually* deny the doctrines of atonement and justification, as held by orthodox christians. What, then, I "again and again intimate," is not a matter of mere inference, but a notorious matter of fact.

But is it not remarkable, Sir, that in the very paragraph in which you protest against "fastening on opponents the consequences which seem to follow from their system," you should do the very thing against which you protest? You here assert, that "the system of the Trinitarians makes the sufferings of Jesus Christ nothing more than the sufferings of a man." Do you not know, Sir, that the Trinitarians decidedly deny this consequence? Do you not know that they hold Jesus Christ to be God and man united in *one person*—that this one complex person suffered and died,—and that his death had all the importance, all the merit, all the efficacy, which could be derived to it from the infinite dignity of such a person? HE WHO WAS IN THE FORM OF GOD, AND THOUGHT IT NO ROBBERY TO BE EQUAL WITH GOD—*was made in the likeness of man, and being found in fashion as a man, HE humbled himself and BECAME OBEDIENT UNTO DEATH, EVEN THE DEATH OF THE CROSS.* How could you then say, that our "system makes the sufferings of Jesus Christ nothing more than the sufferings of a man?"

To several very solemn quotations of scripture, in my former Letter, this remark is subjoined: "If this language sound harsh and unfashionable, I trust, Sir, you will have the goodness not to impute the fault to me; and that you will not on account of any unpleasantness in the language, refuse

to give attention to the momentous sentiment contained in it." Of this you complain. The serious truth is, that I was so forcibly struck with those passages, in contrast with the language which we are accustomed to hear from your quarter, that it really occurred to me that such disgust would be excited by them in the minds of readers of the liberal class, as would almost induce them to throw down the pamphlet and read no further: and I paused to deliberate whether it might not be expedient to suppress the quotations. It was under this impression that the remark was made. On reflection, however, after the Letter was published, and before I saw your reply, I was apprehensive, that, in this instance, I had conveyed an unjust imputation, and sincerely regretted that I had made the remark. When I found that you considered it in this light, and were wounded by it, my regret was increased. I confess my fault in this particular; and devoutly wish that the remark could be obliterated from the Letter, and effaced from every mind.

I have now, I believe, noticed all the instances, in which you have intimated that I am chargeable with misrepresentation, or unjust imputation; and with these brief remarks, I cheerfully submit them all to the candid and serious reconsideration of yourself and every reader.

My next inquiry was, whether you had invalidated any of my "criticisms," statements, positions, or arguments: and after a very attentive examination and re-examination, you will permit me, dear Sir, to say, what I feel perfectly safe in saying, it is my deliberate judgment, and in it I have the concurrence of all with whom I have conversed on the subject, that you have not directly met me at a single point, shewn me to be incorrect in a single statement, nor refuted me in a single position or argument; and, in a word, that your Remarks are no *real* answer to my Letter.

It becomes then an inquiry, by what means you have given to your Remarks the *appearance* and *effect* of an answer? For that they have with some this appearance and this effect, I do not doubt. This inquiry, though a delicate and unpleasant one, justice to the cause of truth forbids me to decline.

In the first place, *you have imputed to me a bad spirit and intention.* With this you begin, and with this you end; and in this, I believe, the effective force of your Remarks mainly lies. Were no bad spirit or intention imputed to me, I presume no person would suppose my Letter to have been answered. But with persons who allow their feelings and passions, instead of reason, and conscience, and scripture, to decide upon the controversy, this imputation has all the effect of the most victorious argument.

My Letter, you say, “though milder in language, **BREATHS** too much of **THE SPIRIT OF THE REVIEW.**” The spirit of the Review you have represented, in your Letter to Mr. Thacher, as being a spirit of “falsehood,” “unfairness,” “disingenuousness,” “uncharitableness,” “illiberality,” “censoriousness,” “insult,” “bitterness,” “malignity,” “pride,” “cruelty,” “fury,” “denunciation,” “heresy,” and “awful temerity.” It was by imputing this spirit to the Reviewer, that you roused the passions of your party into a flame. And now you impute to me the same spirit—whether in equal measure you do not say. It was easy, Sir, if nothing in the breast rendered it difficult, to make this imputation: but it ought not to have been made without proof—clear, substantial proof. Had you convicted me of such a spirit, though it would not have been a refutation of my Letter, yet it would have fixed on me an indispensable obligation to humble myself before you, before the world, and above all before Him whose servant I profess to be. But you have offered no proof; and utterly unconscious as I am of having written with such a spirit, I confidently refer it to all candid judges—I humbly refer it to Him who judgeth righteously—whether the imputation is not entirely gratuitous and unjust.

Of my Letter you further say, “It is too obviously **DESIGNED** to drive both me and my brethren from the church and from the ministry.” Could charity, Sir, neither discern nor imagine any other design than this? What other course should have been adopted, what other means should have been used, had one *designed* to do what he could to *convert his brethren from the error of their ways, and thus to hide a multitude of sins?*

You repeatedly speak of my "ATTEMPTS to render your preaching and your sentiments ODIOUS;" and this you represent to be one "GREAT OBJECT of my Letter." This also plainly imports a malignant spirit and intention. But, Sir, in what way have I attempted to render your sentiments and preaching odious, excepting by a simple exhibition of them, without discolouring, distortion, or declamation, in contrast with those of orthodox ministers and of the apostles of Christ.

In pp. 22 and 23, you make a representation of my spirit and intention, at which you "shudder," and at which you had reason to shudder. But that part of your Remarks I shall have occasion to consider in another place.

Towards the close you have this passage: "It does not appear, no, not in a single line, that Dr. Worcester ever brought home to himself the case of his injured brethren, ever imagined himself in their situation, and inquired how under such circumstances he would himself have felt and acted." Here I am represented as devoid of brotherly sympathy and feeling; and here is the consummation of that unchristian and malignant spirit, which is imputed to me from the beginning of your Remarks to the end. Sir, I have reason to sympathize with my brethren, whenever they are injured by attempts "to drive them from the ministry," or to deprive them of their comfort, their good name, or their usefulness; I have no occasion to "imagine myself in their situation;" and I should, indeed, be a monster of insensibility, had I no tenderness of feeling for them. I have not forgotten that I was once myself "driven" from a settlement, a church, and people, dear to my heart; driven, indeed, not by persecuting Calvinists, but by liberal men; yet not on that account entirely without pain. I have witnessed the sufferings of others in similar circumstances, and particularly of a beloved brother in your vicinity. If I have not been deceived, these painful scenes, while they have brought me pretty fully acquainted with the charity and liberality of the age, have had a salutary effect upon my feelings, and taught me how much it becomes the professed servants of Christ to treat their brethren with forbearance, kindness, tenderness, and undissembled good will. This lesson may I never forget—

never fail to practise towards all my brethren, however they may differ from me in opinion, and in whatever way I may be called in duty to bear testimony against their errors, or their proceedings.

Your imputation to me of a bad spirit and design, I do not attribute to any particular unfriendliness to me. I attribute it to a general cause—to a general state of mind, and habit of thinking and feeling; and on this account I am induced to consider it with more particularity, than I should be willing to bestow on any thing merely personal. It is but too manifest that you and your liberal brethren are in the habit of regarding, and of representing and denouncing those who hold the sentiments which I espouse, as being possessed of a malignant spirit. And having been accustomed to witness how completely the imputation of this spirit serves, with a large portion of people, instead of a thousand “proofs of holy writ” against us, you resort, it would seem habitually, and, I would hope, without any meditated intention to injure, to this convenient and effectual expedient. To what, if not to this habit, shall we attribute the frequent, and entirely unnecessary mention, both in your Letter and Remarks, of *Calvinists*;* and almost always with some insinuation, as if they above all men were sinners in the odious matter of persecution?

But, Sir, is this charitable, is it candid, is it magnanimous, is it just? Was not Arius, the father of that class of Unitarians to which you yourself seem to belong, a violent persecutor? Was it not he and his followers, who, *first of all* among professed christians, set the hideous and direful example of *secularizing the discipline of the church, and persecuting their opponents to imprisonment, banishment, and death*? And did they not crimson the whole Roman empire with the blood of Trinitarians? Did not Davides perish in prison,

* The present controversy has no respect to points peculiarly *Calvinistick*. Arminius was as decided as Calvin on the doctrines of the Trinity in the Godhead, the entire corruption of human nature, atonement by the death of Christ, justification by grace through faith in him, and moral renovation by the Holy Spirit. His system, it is true, was soon corrupted, and a mixture of Pelagianism and Socinianism came to be called Arminianism; but genuine Arminianism is no less directly in opposition, than Calvinism, to every species of Unitarianism.

under the unrelenting severity of the persecuting spirit of Faustus Socinus and his adherents, the founders of another class of Unitarians? Was it not by Archbishops Laud and Sheldon, the fathers in England of adulterated Arminianism, and of sentiments once called latitudinarian, now called liberal, that Calvinists were forbidden to preach on the "Five Points,"—that two thousand ministers, confessedly the best in the kingdom, were "driven" from their parishes on St. Bartholomew's day, and persecuted with fines and imprisonments, and some of them to death,—and that our Calvinistick forefathers were compelled to leave their native country, and seek an asylum in the American wilderness? In our own country and in our own age, who have shewn the most determined spirit to "drive" their opponents from the ministry, by private exertions, by ecclesiastical proceedings, and by judicial decisions? And since the commencement of the present controversy, on which side, may I not ask, has there been most of wrath, and clamour, and evil speaking, among the people in the places of greatest excitement?

I have no pleasure, Sir, in adverting to these deplorable facts; nor would I, for my life, mention them with the spirit and for the purpose of retaliation. I should deem it most unchristian, unjust, and injurious in me to reproach you and your liberal brethren, with the violent spirit of persecution, displayed by men of your sentiments in the days of other times, when ecclesiastical discipline was secularized, and confounded with judicial proceedings. I should deem myself a most unfair and ungenerous disputant, should I, in this discussion, endeavour to divert attention from the real points in debate, and to enlist passion and prejudice on my side, by a perpetual recurrence to such extraneous and odious facts. Persuaded as I am, that your feelings would revolt at the thought of acting over again the violent and bloody scenes of Arius or of Laud; I am no less full in the confidence, that you have no good reason to believe, or to insinuate, that your opponents would not revolt with equal horror from every thing like "the flames lighted for Servetus." Such a belief, such an insinuation, permit me, dear Sir, to say, is unworthy of your enlightened mind, and your elevated standing; and could

never have found a place with you, but for the unpropitious habit to which I have referred, and of which probably you have been too little conscious.

Have we yet to learn, that the spirit of persecution is the offspring, not of any particular system of religious sentiments, but of that corruption of our fallen nature, which, if not subdued by divine grace, will exert itself against the true spirit of the gospel, sometimes in the form of a fiend of darkness, sometimes in the guise of an angel of light, according to circumstances. It ought not to have been mentioned in the present controversy. On neither side are we pleading for persecution. In regard to this spirit, its atrocity or its hatefulness, there is no question between us; and to fix the attention upon this, as if it were mainly or in part the subject matter in debate, can serve no other purpose, than to excite passion, inflame prejudice, embitter feeling, mislead the judgment, and bar the mind against argument and truth. It is time, and more than time, that every thing of this sort should be utterly discarded, by enlightened and liberal men, and by all who would bear the christian name. Though we differ, and widely differ in our opinions;—though we engage in debate on most important and interesting points;—though we should find occasion even to separate as to christian fellowship; yet there need not be, there ought not to be, and if our tempers were right there would not be, any bitterness, or wrath, or anger, or clamour, or evil speaking on either side. The gospel teaches us to exercise unfailing charity and good will, not only towards those whom we receive to christian fellowship, but towards all men.

Another of your means for giving to your Remarks the *appearance and effect* of an answer is that of representing my Letter as being light and “trifling.” You speak repeatedly, and not a little contemptuously of “verbal criticism,” and of “humour and sarcasm.” Of the criticism, I shall have occasion to take some notice in another place; upon the rest, my remarks will be short. If, Sir, I have used lightness, if my Letter was not serious, I was greatly deceived and greatly to blame. The subject I certainly considered a very momentous one; and I did really apprehend that the seriousness

with which I treated it would be offensive to many. If, as you say, particularly in regard to the last head, "the view which I took of the subject gave me a field for my powers of humour and sarcasm," I believe that you and every reader must suppose that my powers of this kind are extremely limited and feeble. I confess I was forcibly reminded by your remarks, that a writer, whose name I will not mention in any connexion with yours, chose to call the book of Proverbs "Solomon's Jest Book."—"Let us open the book," says the Bishop of Landaff in his answer, "and see what kind of jests it contains."

Another of the means by which you have given to your Remarks the *appearance and effects* of an answer is that of *diverting attention from the point and the argument*; and in such a way as to have the effect of *suppressing the truth*. Besides what is *general* of this kind, in imputing to me a bad spirit and a light manner; there are *particular instances*, some of which it may be proper to consider.

In regard to my first head, you very candidly acknowledge, that I have "pointed out an inaccuracy in the language which you employed to express the charges contained in the Review." This pointing out of a slight verbal inaccuracy you represent as being all that I have done; and to this head entire you seem to refer in your repeated mention of "verbal criticism." Thus by noticing a trivial circumstance, and giving to the whole a light name, you divert the attention from the main point and argument, and conceal the truth in the case.—You had brought, Sir, against the Reviewer, the heavy charge of "*falsehood*." This charge I sincerely believed to be unfounded; and I attempted, not merely by pointing out a small verbal inaccuracy, but by fairly examining those parts of the Review to which you referred, to show that it really was unfounded. I do not rest on my own judgment only in the persuasion which I feel, that in this attempt I was not unsuccessful. But you say, "the question is not what a verbal critick with a dictionary in his hand may make out of the Review, but what are the impressions which readers at large receive from it." Here, Sir, I again protest against the "rule" of construction which you have repeatedly applied; at least against your man-

ner of applying it. You surely cannot be unapprised, that people receive very different "impressions" from "writings" and discourses, especially on controverted points, according to the different tempers, or states of mind, with which they read or hear. If, as you intimate, you have not met with a single individual who did not receive from the Review, impressions, coincident with the charge which you made; I, on the other hand, have not met with a single individual who did receive such impressions: and I really believe there were very few who did, before their minds were prepared for it by your Letter. Your "way," then, "of settling the dispute" is not so "short a one" as you seem to imagine.

I was far, Sir, from believing that you intended to prefer against the Reviewer a false and injurious charge. I really did suppose that, owing to some unpleasant state of mind, you had received from the Review an incorrect impression; and did hope that you would see, and rejoice to see, that it was incorrect, and do honour to yourself and to our holy profession, by frankly retracting the accusation, and redressing the wrong which you had unwittingly committed.—And here I must say, that I am more fully persuaded, if possible, than when I wrote before, that your first charge against the Reviewer is entirely unjust; and that had you duly attended to the scope of his remarks, you would have seen, that where he speaks of "Unitarianism, in Mr. Belsham's sense of the word, being the *predominant* religion of the liberal party," he meant not to determine any thing in respect to *numbers*, but only in respect to *prominence and influence*. His reference to the college and to the principal publications of the party, makes his meaning sufficiently plain.

You say, p. 14. that I "again and again intimate that Unitarians, of course, reject all the great and distinguishing doctrines of the gospel, particularly the doctrine of atonement by Christ's death." And upon this you ask, if it is "possible that I am unacquainted with the writings of Dr. Samuel Clark, and with Bible News," in which books the doctrine of atonement is asserted. I have before noticed the implied charge in this of misrepresentation on my part; what I would now notice is your turning the attention from the

fact and the proof, and concealing the truth in the case. I know very well that, in the writings here referred to, the doctrine of atonement is asserted; and I also know, and all who are conversant with this subject know, that the Unitarian writers of the present day generally deny this doctrine, as do all who agree with them in denying the essential divinity of Jesus Christ: and if Dr. Clark's works and Bible News are "popular" among them, it is not because they assert the doctrine of atonement; but because they serve to unsettle the minds of people in regard to the Trinity, and to *start* them from the rock down the steep and fearful declivity of Unitarianism.

"There is a part" of my Letter you say, p. 19, "according to which our charity towards the lowest Unitarians not only proves our indifference to truth, but makes us partakers in their sentiments and deeds." To *divert attention* from the point and the argument here, you instantly direct it to Calvinists, and Hopkinsians. "It is well known," you say, "that the old fashioned Calvinists regard the new divinity of the Hopkinsians with great horror; but it is also true that 'a peculiar brotherhood is established' between these two classes of christians in New England. The Calvinists here have never, as a party, borne testimony against Hopkinsian peculiarities, have never 'purged themselves from the guilt of them,' but walk with Hopkinsians on as friendly terms as we do with the lowest Unitarians." Admit all that you here state to be true; does it prove that "the liberal party" are not guilty of "mutilating the New Testament, rejecting nearly all the fundamental doctrines of the gospel, and degrading the Saviour to the condition of a fallible, peccable, and ignorant man?" Not in the least. But there is an egregious error in your statement. It is a well known fact, that what you call the old fashioned Calvinists in New England, have borne their earnest, decided, and publick testimony against what they consider as errors in the Hopkinsian theory; and the Hopkinsians, on their part, have borne their testimony, equally earnest, decided, and publick, against what they regard as errors in the old Calvinistick system. But while they have done this, they have not, on

either part, held these errors to be fundamental, as they do hold the errors of the Unitarians; but have mutually regarded each other as being orthodox and sound, in the great essentials of christian doctrine. And, Sir, however grievous it may be to their common opponents, the acknowledged fact that they do "walk together on friendly terms," notwithstanding their minor differences and disputes, and all the attempts from your quarter to sow discord between them, is highly honourable to their principles and feelings; and affords most decisive proof that, in the allegations so continually and vehemently urged against them, as if they were entirely devoid of charity, and would acknowledge as christians none who differ from them in any point, they have been slanderously reported. Had "the old fashioned Calvinists of New York" been as well acquainted with the sentiments and characters of the different classes of orthodox christians in New England, as these are with one another, they would never have given the recommendations which they have given to such a book as Ely's Contrast.

Another of the means by which you have given to your Remarks the *appearance and effect* of an answer, is that of *misstatement*. Let me distinctly promise that as, in the preceding articles, I have not intended in any instance to impeach your motives, so here I mean not to insinuate that you have *designedly* misstated. The misstatements which I am about to point out, and which are only a part of what might be pointed out, I attribute to no bad intention, but to the vague and indiscriminating manner of treating subjects, to which you seem to be habituated.

"It may next be observed," you say, p. 9, "that the common disputes about the great doctrines of the gospel have not related so much to their TRUTH and IMPORTANCE, as to some inferiour points connected with them." Now, Sir, in direct opposition to this statement, I should feel the utmost safety in affirming, that "the disputes about the great doctrines of the gospel have related," and do relate primarily and "chiefly to their TRUTH and IMPORTANCE." This unquestionably is the fact in regard to the doctrines directly in question in the present dispute: the doctrines

of the Trinity in the Godhead, the true divinity of the Saviour, atonement for sin by his death, and justification through faith in his blood. On our part, these doctrines are held to be true and essentially important; on your part, both the importance and the truth of them are denied. So long as this is the case, to dispute about "inferiour points connected with these doctrines" would be most idle and preposterous. To give some plausibility to your strange assertion, you refer to disputes concerning the "benevolence of God" and "his omnipresence." But these, Sir, are not "peculiar doctrines of the gospel," but fundamental doctrines of natural religion. "In like manner," however, you say, "christians have disputed about the precise way in which Christ's death has an influence on our forgiveness: but that it has a real and important influence on forgiveness almost all have united in asserting." This is one instance out of many of the manner, in which you conceal the real and essential points of difference in debate. The plain truth is, and it ought not to be concealed, that while some professed christians hold the death of Christ, *God manifest in the flesh*, to have been an expiatory sacrifice for sin, on account of which solely and through faith in this blood, forgiveness is to be obtained; others deny this doctrine entirely, and hold that the death of Christ, a *mere creature*, was in no proper sense expiatory, and has no influence on forgiveness, only as it attests the truth of his religion and the benevolence of God. It is in this latter sense, at least in some sense altogether different from the former, undoubtedly, that you "tell your hearers that God sent his Son to die for us." The difference between us in regard to "spiritual influences," to which you also refer, is not less wide and essential. And, Sir, I believe you might be less "general and vague in your representation of the truths of the gospel," and not "be precise above what is written," nor less "*faithful*" than you now are.

"It is urged," you say. p. 16, "that OUR SENTIMENTS LEAD US into an entire indifference to christian truth; that we believe all error to be innocent; that we consider belief in the truth as no virtue." No, Sir: but what I advanced

on this topick was "urged" directly and explicitly upon your broad assertion, that "to believe with Mr. Belsham is no crime," in connexion with other declarations and representations to the same effect. Why then did you not fairly and magnanimously meet me upon this ground? As to what you say in this connexion of "love of the truth," as being essential to the "faith to which salvation is promised," there is no controversy between us. I am happy in expressing my agreement with you in this point; and most devoutly wish that in every other important point we were equally agreed. In coincidence also with you, I hold that there may be true faith, where there is but little knowledge of divine truth. I am accustomed to make a wide difference between *ignorance* of truth and *rejection* of truth; between the infelicity of bad instruction, and scanty means of divine knowledge; and the audacity of opposing reason to revelation, and the wisdom of this world to the wisdom of God.

What I offered under the third and last head of my Letter, on the question of "*separation*," and which you say is "infinitely the most important part" of the whole, you have almost entirely *misstated*. I did not undertake to decide the question of separation in the way of giving an opinion; but thought it more befitting, and more likely to be useful, to submit some considerations, relating to the subject, which appeared to me relevant, and worthy to be most seriously weighed on both sides. To these considerations you bring no argument in reply.

You represent, that "the separation, which has been made in England by the Unitarians themselves," is something far less "solemn,"—vastly less dreadful, than the separation which you suppose me to favour. What then is the separation which the Unitarians in England have made? You describe it to be "*a separation in worship—a separation produced by the ADOPTION OF PRAYERS, HYMNS, AND DOXOLOGIES, ACCOMMODATED TO THEIR PECULIAR SENTIMENTS.*" Are we to understand, Sir, that you and your liberal brethren here, are ready for such a separation as this? If so, there is no further occasion of debate on this subject, unless your opponents should be unwilling to separate. Let it be under-

stood, that the differences between us are such, that we cannot consistently *worship together*—cannot unite in offering the same prayers, nor join in the same hymns and doxologies,—and the question is settled. What is this, I pray you, short of a thorough disruption of fellowship, a complete non-communion?—Yet this separation you admit to have been made by the Unitarians themselves in England, and of this you express not the slightest disapprobation.

You omit, however, to state “to the publick” the strong terms and the earnest manner, in which the English Unitarians urge this separation. You do not mention that they loudly call upon their people “to come out from BABYLON,”—to separate themselves from IDOLATERS; and earnestly represent that the separation of Unitarians from Trinitarians is as obviously proper and necessary, as was the separation of the Protestants from the church of Rome, and that such Unitarians as continue to worship with Trinitarians, are either still in great darkness, or else guilty of compromising their consciences to a most reprehensible extent. This you have omitted to mention: yet you who are much more extensively conversant with the English Unitarian writers, than I can pretend to be, must have been perfectly acquainted with the fact.

Such then is the separation, made by the Unitarians themselves in England; and such the terms and the manner in which its importance is urged. Of this separation, I repeat it, you express no disapprobation: you speak of it in no other manner, than if in your judgment it were entirely unobjectionable. Now, Sir, permit me to ask, what greater or more dreadful separation than this, do any of your opponents contemplate? Has even the Panoplist Reviewer proposed any thing more frightful? or has he urged his proposal in terms more decisive, or in a manner more vehement? To what, beyond this, can any of the considerations submitted in my Letter, by fair construction or legitimate inference, be made to favour?

Yet speaking of me, p. 23, you say, “The obvious import of his Letter (AND IT IS THE OBVIOUS IMPORT, AND NOT A “STRAINED AND CIRCUITOUS INTERPRETATION WHICH I

REGARD) may be thus expressed: 'Every man who cannot
 "admit as a doctrine of scripture, THE GREAT DOCTRINE OF
 "THREE PERSONS IN ONE GOD, WHICH I AND OTHER OR-
 "THODOX CHRISTIANS EMBRACE, BELIEVES AN OPPOSITE
 "GOSPEL, REJECTS THE TRUE GOSPEL, despises the authority
 "of Jesus Christ, IS OF COURSE A MAN WHOLLY WANTING IN
 "TRUE PIETY AND WITHOUT CHRISTIAN VIRTUE; and may
 "in perfect consistency with christian love be rejected as un-
 "worthy the name of a christian.'" Here, Sir, I suppose
 you to have applied the "rule" of construction which I have
 twice before noticed,—that of the "impression" which hap-
 pened to be made on your mind, without duly considering the
 meaning of the words, and the scope of the argument. And
 here I record my final and solemn protest against your use of
 this rule.

In vain, Sir, will any one search in my Letter for what
 you would make me say. I did indeed think it right, not
 "studiously to magnify" the points of difference between us,
 which you seemed studiously to conceal; but distinctly to state
 them, and set them in a fair and clear light. In doing this,
 I contrasted Mr. Belsham's sentiments with the doctrines
 held by orthodox christians; (not however making you an-
 swerable for those sentiments, any further than as you plead
 for their being held in general christian fellowship;) and I
 did pronounce that "one or the other of these schemes must
 be what St. Paul denominates another gospel, and against
 which and its abettors he solemnly pronounces his apostolick
 anathema." This is the most that I have any where said.
 I did not draw the *inference*, that "every man" who rejects
 the orthodox doctrines and embraces Mr. Belsham's senti-
 ments, "*is of course a man wholly wanting in true piety, and
 without christian virtue.*" This, Sir, is your own inference;
 I have said no such thing. I do not, however, complain of
 your making the inference, though you protest against the
 practice: but since you *have* made it, you will permit me to
 hold you to it. By making this inference, you give it to be
 understood, and in effect concede, that in your own judgment
 every one who does embrace another gospel, than that which
 Paul preached, "*is of course wholly wanting in true piety, and
 without christian virtue.*"—Now, Sir, will you deny the

premises? Will you deny, that either Mr. Belsham's system, or that called orthodox, must be another gospel? Will you deny that these two systems are essentially different, from the foundation to the topstone? We are here, as you will certainly perceive, to lay out of the question the doctrines of natural religion, and confine our attention to such as are peculiar to the gospel. Do not, then, the Unitarians, whose sentiments are set forth by Mr. Belsham, reject every doctrine of the gospel, as held by orthodox christians? I am persuaded, Sir, you will not deny this. Your own inference, then, is that either those who embrace Mr. Belsham's scheme, or those who hold the doctrines called orthodox, are "of course wholly wanting in true piety and without christian virtue." I now refer it to you to say further, whether they can consistently meet together at the table of the Lord.

But you make me say, not only that the Unitarians who hold with Mr. Belsham, are "wholly wanting in true piety and without christian virtue," which I have nowhere said; but also that "every man" is so, "who cannot admit as a doctrine of scripture, the great doctrine of three persons in one God, which I and other orthodox christians embrace." So far, however, from having said this, I have not even asserted the *premises* from which such an inference could be drawn. Nowhere have I said or intimated, that every one who does not admit the doctrine of the Trinity as I hold it, "rejects the true gospel, and believes an opposite gospel." For stating that I have said this, you have not the shadow of a warrant.

Dr. Samuel Clark's views of the Trinity, as I before intimated, are very different from mine and those called orthodox, and in my judgment very erroneous, and of dangerous tendency. Yet I am by no means prepared to say, that every one who adopts his views of the Trinity rejects the true gospel, embraces another, and is devoid of christian faith and virtue: for I can suppose that a person may adopt those views, and yet be a sound believer in the doctrine of atonement by Christ's death, and of justification through faith in his blood. As much as this I am also ready to say respecting other views of the Trinity very different from mine, and in my opinion

very erroneous and dangerous. Let me repeat it, and let it be remembered, my concern in this debate is with those who deny the essential divinity, and the propitiatory sacrifice of Jesus Christ. These doctrines I certainly do consider as constituting the very foundation of the gospel; and I feel no unwillingness to have it understood, that in my judgment every one who rejects these doctrines does reject the true gospel, and must either embrace another gospel, or be a Jew or an Infidel. If you say, as you have before inferred, "then all who deny these doctrines are wholly wanting in true piety and without christian virtue;" I will leave you in the quiet possession of the inference, and would earnestly recommend it to your very serious consideration.

For myself, however, I think it sufficient at present, to refer the deniers of these doctrines, as I would all others, in regard to their inward piety and their final state, to HIM who searcheth the heart, and to whom it belongs to award the retributions of eternity. Always, Sir, would I feel, and deeply feel, that I am a "frail, fallible creature;" and if for this reason I should "shudder at the awful temerity" of adjudging to final perdition, "men of the profoundest understandings, of the purest lives, and of unwearied devotion to the study of God's word;" no less should I shudder at the no less awful temerity of adjudging to eternal life, men, however fair their characters in the eyes of the world, however renowned for what the world calls wisdom, however distinguished among the friends of science, or of sacred literature, who, nevertheless, deny the blood of atonement, degrade the *Lord who bought them* to the condition of a mere creature, and, *not submitting themselves to the righteousness of God, go about to establish their own righteousness.* I did not, therefore, when writing my former Letter, nor do I now, think it incumbent on me to determine how much of divine truth a man may reject, and yet have saving faith; or what is the precise point or degree of error, beyond which there can be no hope of any one's salvation. With questions of this sort, I have not at all intermeddled: not only because I am consciously incompetent to decide upon them; but also because I do not consider them as belonging

to the present discussion: and I have wished that the discussion might not be incumbered or perplexed with any thing extraneous or irrelevant.

The question now at issue is, *whether visible christian fellowship ought to be maintained between orthodox christians and Unitarians.* There are cases, indisputably, in which it may be right to maintain visible fellowship with individuals, respecting the sincerity of whose christian profession we may have very strong doubts; on the other hand, there may be cases in which it were right to decline visible fellowship with individuals, of whose christian sincerity we have very strong hopes. When, in the regular exercise of discipline, a church passes the sentence of excommunication upon a peccant member, it does not by that act pronounce the excluded person to be "wholly wanting in true piety and without christian virtue." Leaving that decision to the omniscient Judge, it is sufficient for the church to decide, that the person is so disorderly in his walk, or so corrupt in his sentiments, that the purity and welfare of the church, the honour of religion, and fidelity to the cause of truth, require his exclusion. This decision should be made, only in the spirit of charity, and in the fear of God. Upon the same general principle, a church may withdraw fellowship from another church, without meaning to pronounce that every individual in that other church is utterly graceless and in a state of condemnation. The Protestants did not pronounce this, when they separated from the church of Rome:—but they did pronounce that the errors of that church were subversive of the gospel, and most dangerous to the eternal interests of mankind; and they felt it incumbent on them to *come out and be separate* from all communion with those errors, and to bear their publick, decided, and most solemn testimony against them.

Nothing more than this, Sir, has been proposed in the present case. It is our solemn conviction, that the errors of the Unitarians are subversive of the gospel, and most dangerous to the eternal interests of mankind; and we think it right and indispensably incumbent on us, clearly to develop them before the world, fully to display their enormity and their pernicious tendency, and faithfully to bear our

testimony against them, and to warn all people to beware lest they be deceived and misled by them to their final ruin. This we believe to be an urgent dictate of that charity, which supremely seeks the glory of God and the salvation of men: a dictate, which we are fully persuaded we may obey, without justly incurring the charge of "awful temerity,"—without pronouncing any "sentence" more "tremendous" than we are warranted by the word of God to pronounce,—without taking upon ourselves any "responsibility," which it would not be treacherous and most criminal, in those who are *set for the defence of the gospel*, to decline.

Such, Sir, are my views; such are the principles on which, in my former Letter, the remarks and arguments on the subject of separation were founded; and with these views and principles, all which is there advanced is in perfect and most evident coincidence.—Your statement, therefore, of the "import of the concluding part" of my Letter is most palpably incorrect and unjust. And though I attribute this incorrectness and this injustice, not to any injurious intention, but to that *habit* of thinking and feeling of which I have before taken notice; yet after what I have now stated, I think I have a right to call upon you,—and *I do solemnly call upon you, to retract this flagrant misstatement*. I know indeed, you have given it to be understood, that you shall not write again; but, Sir, the publick disputant who makes this resolve ought to be careful, not merely, not to "put down ought in malice," but to write nothing which justice to his opponent and to the cause of truth,—nothing which the sacred principles of christianity will require him to retract.

It is upon the ground of this incorrect and injurious statement, that you have founded the earnest and impassioned appeal, in which you seem to have put forth all your powers of rhetorick, and by which you evidently designed to make your grand and decisive impression against me. But as the ground is removed, the whole splendid shew must dissolve, "like the baseless fabrick of a vision."—As to what you say, in this connexion, with reference to my statement, that "the Saviour whom you acknowledge is infinitely inferiour to ours," a very brief remark may be sufficient. I did suppose

you would yet acknowledge JESUS CHRIST to be your SAVIOUR. Your declaration, however, if it has any pertinency, plainly imports that you do not. How can you then sit down at HIS table in communion with those who *do* acknowledge HIM as *their* SAVIOUR,—and who with undisssembled gratitude and devotion unite in the holy ascription,—*Unto HIM that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; TO HIM BE GLORY AND DOMINION FOR EVER AND EVER.* We worship, Sir, THE FATHER, SON, AND HOLY GHOST. Do you worship this same GOD?

You “did look” to me, you are pleased to say, “for a healing spirit.” Happy, indeed will he be, who shall be instrumental in “raising up the foundations of many generations,” and justly “be called, The repairer of the breach, The restorer of paths to dwell in.” But wo to him, who would “heal the hurt slightly, saying, Peace, peace, when there is no peace!” Few men can have greater inducements, than I have, to listen to the enchanting voice of peace; few could have engaged in this controversy with greater reluctance, or have brought to it greater heaviness and sorrow of heart.—But the servants of HIM who *endured the cross, despising the shame*, must not confer with flesh and blood: must never forget the solemn declaration, *He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; and he that taketh not his cross and followeth after me is not worthy of me.*

You charge me with “studiously magnifying the differences” between orthodox Christians and Unitarians; and with “studiously overlooking the points of agreement.” There is certainly no occasion to magnify the differences; they are in themselves sufficiently great. To me, however, it has appeared vastly important, that people should “learn the distinction between Trinitarianism and Unitarianism.” This you recommend in your “Note;” and in this recommendation I cordially join. Upon this, however, you proceed to some discussion, as if with a design to shew the “distinction;” and you finally represent it as being little, if any thing more

than a mere "sound." Elsewhere, also, you speak of it as being only a "difference which relates to the obscurest of all subjects, to the essence and metaphysical nature of God." And throughout both your Letter and your Remarks you seem to have laboured, assiduously, to conceal the points of difference between us, and to make the impression that these points are few and of very little importance. This mode of treating the subject appears to me exceedingly improper, and of most deceptive tendency. Is this the way, Sir, to promote the knowledge of truth? Is it thus that you would conduct "that candid and impartial research," which according to your Letter, is to "guide mankind to a purer system of christianity, than is now to be found in any church under Heaven,"—and to bring about a "glorious reformation of the church of God?"

In opposition to this system of concealment, I have thought it right and important to endeavour a developement, and to lay the differences between us open to the publick in their true light. On our part we have no dread of this; no dread of a clear and full developement, It has long been our earnest desire, that your sentiments as well as ours, might be known; and that all christians and all people might well understand the points on which you differ from us. On this account we devoutly rejoice that the subject has been brought before the publick. In our view, it has come forward in a way to answer an important purpose. A "general discussion" of the differences between us, would have been of little avail, while people were utterly unapprised that such differences really existed, and were fast asleep in regard to them. It was first of all desirable that these differences should be disclosed; that people should be made to see them to be not imaginary, but real; not of trivial consequence, but of essential importance; and that their attention should be strongly drawn to them.

It was under impressions of this kind, that I was induced to make the statements, exhibited in my former Letter; and under the same impressions, I now proceed to a still more distinct and detailed statement.

Orthodox christians hold, that the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments *were given by inspiration of God; and that all which they contain is to be received as truth, ON THE AUTHORITY OF GOD.*—But by the principal Unitarian writers, and, so far as is known, by Unitarians generally, the *plenary inspiration* of the scriptures is denied. “The scriptures,” says Dr. Priestley,* “were written *without any particular inspiration*, by men who wrote according to the best of their knowledge, and who, from their circumstances, could not be mistaken, with regard to the greater facts of which they were properly witnesses; but (like other men subject to prejudice) might be liable to adopt a hasty and ill grounded opinion, concerning things which did not fall within the compass of their own knowledge, and which had no connexion with any thing that was so. We ought all of us, therefore, to consider ourselves fully at liberty to examine, with the greatest rigour, both the reasonings of the writers, and the facts of which we find any account in their writings; that, *JUDGING BY THE RULES OF JUST CRITICISM, we may distinguish what may be depended on from what may not.*” Mr. Belsham says,† “The scriptures contain a faithful and credible account of the *christian doctrine*, which is the *true word of God*; but they are not *themselves* the word of God, nor did they ever assume that title; and it is highly improper to speak of them as such; as it leads inattentive readers to suppose they were written under a plenary inspiration, to which they make no pretension; and as such expressions expose christianity, unnecessarily, to the cavils of unbelievers.”‡

* History of Early Opinions, vol. iv, p. 5.

† Review of Wilberforce, p. 19.

‡ Perhaps I may be charged, says Dr. Magee, with having made a distinction in his place, which gives an unfair representation of Unitarians, inasmuch as they also *profess* to derive their arguments from scripture. But whether that profession be not intended in mockery, one might be almost tempted to question; when it is found that in *every* instance, the doctrine of scripture is tried by their abstract notion of right, and rejected if not accordant:—when by means of figure and allusion, it is every where made to speak a language the most repugnant to all fair, critical interpretation; until emptied of its true meaning, it is converted into a vehicle for every fantastick theory, which under the name of *rational*, they may think proper to adopt:—when in such parts as propound gospel truths of a contexture too solid to admit of an escape in figure and allusion, the sacred writers are charged

Though all Unitarians may not be ready fully to adopt the language or the sentiments on this subject of Dr. Priestley, Mr. Belsham, or others, mentioned in the note below; yet I believe very few, if any of them, admit the plenary inspiration of the scriptures. But, Sir, if the plenary inspiration of the scriptures be denied, where shall we stop? How shall we determine what is the word of God, and what is not? What other test, or criterion, of truth have we, than REASON?

Accordingly the Unitarians very generally seem to have adopted "the fundamental rule" of the old Socinians, "That no doctrine ought to be acknowledged as true in its nature, or divine in its origin, all whose parts are not level to the comprehension of the human understanding; and that, whatever the Holy Scriptures teach concerning the perfections of God, his counsels and decrees, and the way of salvation, must be modified, curtailed, and filed down, in such a manner, by the transforming power of art and argument, as to answer the extent of our limited faculties."* That this is the principle, and this the labour of Unitarians, no one who is conversant

as bunglers, producing "lame accounts, improper quotations, and inconclusive reasonings," (*Dr. Priestley's 12th Letter to Mr. Burn*) and philosophy is consequently called in to rectify their errors:—when one writer of this class (Steinbart) tells us, that "the narrations," (in the New Testament) "true or false, are only suited for ignorant, uncultivated minds, who cannot enter into the evidence of natural religion;" and again, that "Moses, according to the childish conceptions of the Jews in his days, paints God as agitated by violent affections, partial to one people, and hating all other nations:"—when another, (Semler) remarking on St. Peter's declaration, that *prophecy came not in old time by the will of man, but Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit*, says, that "Peter speaks here according to the conception of the Jews," and that "the prophets may have delivered the offspring of their own brains as divine revelations:" (*Dr. Erskine's Sketches and Hints of Ch. Hist.* No. 3, pp. 66, 71.)—when a third (Engedin) speaks of St. John's portion of the New Testament, as written with "concise and abrupt obscurity, inconsistent with itself, and made up of allegories;" and Gagneus glories in having given "a little light to St. Paul's darkness, a darkness, as some think, industriously affected:"—when we find Mr. Evanson, one of those able commentators referred to by Mr. Belsham in his *Review*, &c. p. 206: assert, (*Dissonance*, &c. p. i,) that "the evangelical histories contain gross and irreconcilable contradictions," and consequently discard three out of the four, retaining the gospel of St. Luke only, at the same time drawing his pen over as much of this, as either from its *infelicity of style*, or other such causes happens not to meet his approbation." *Magee on Atonement, Notes*, No. 14.

* Mosheim's *Ecol. Hist.* Cent. 16. chap. 4.

with their writings can doubt. Denying the plenary inspiration of the scriptures, they hold themselves at liberty to subject those sacred writings to all the torture of the most rigorous criticism; not for the purpose merely of deciding upon "various readings," of elucidating obscure passages by reference to ancient customs and manners, or of ascertaining the true meaning of the original words, and their most natural sense in the connexions in which they occur; but for the purpose especially, of explaining the different parts in such a manner as to make them yield a meaning conformable to their views of what is *rational*. In this mighty work human reason appears in all its pride, and the wisdom of this world in its highest glory.

Here is the primary point of difference between orthodox christians and Unitarians. The orthodox, holding the Bible to be the word of the living God, feel themselves warranted and bound to embrace as divine truth, every doctrine which they find revealed in that sacred volume, however humbling to reason it may be, however mysterious and incomprehensible. But the Unitarians, regarding the Bible in a very different light, are not restrained from using greater liberties with it: are not restrained from rejecting such doctrines, as transcend the comprehension of their own understandings, or do not comport with their views of what is rational; but glory in excluding all mystery from religion. Hence the name which they assume of RATIONAL CHRISTIANS; and hence the imposing superiority which they affect over those, who understand the scriptures in their natural and obvious sense, and believe in doctrines confessedly beyond the powers of the human mind to comprehend.

On the authority of the scriptures, orthodox christians believe that the one Jehovah exists in a Trinity, called the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. These we call three *persons*; because we have no better word by which to denote the distinction; and because THEY apply to *each other* the personal pronouns *I, Thou, and He*, and to *themselves* together, the plurals *we, us, and our*. This Trinity in the Godhead we acknowledge to be a mystery, which we pretend not to comprehend, and which we would not undertake to explain.

So too the eternal existence of God, in any mode, is to us a mystery; his omnipresence is a mystery; his omniscience is a mystery; his creating all things out of nothing by the word of his power, is a mystery. We find mysteries, indeed, in all his perfections and works; mysteries in natural religion, as well as in revealed; mysteries in every thing around us, as utterly beyond our powers to explain or comprehend, as that of the Trinity in the Godhead.

We believe this doctrine, because we find it in those scriptures, which we receive as given by divine inspiration. In the scriptures, the original Hebrew name, by which the Supreme Being is most commonly called, is *plural*: [*Aleim, Gods.*] In coincidence with this plural name, other plural words are used. "*Let us make man in our own image.*" "*Behold the man has become as one of us.*" "*The knowledge of the Holy* (in the original the *HOLY ONES*) *is understanding.*" "*Remember now thy Creator* (original *CREATORS*) *in the days of thy youth.*" This remarkable use of plurals, which runs through the Hebrew scriptures, we think clearly denotes a plurality of what, as I before observed, we call *persons*. Yet we read, "*Hear O Israel, Jehovah our God* (our *Aleim, Gods*) *is one Jehovah;*" and of the *unity* of God we find in the scriptures abundant proof. To each of the *Holy Ones*, however, to the Father, to the Son, and to the Spirit, the scriptures ascribe *divine names and titles,—divine attributes,—divine works,—and divine honours.* The proofs of all this are so abundant and so memorable, that for my present purpose it is not necessary to cite even a specimen. Each of the *THREE*, therefore, we believe to be truly and essentially *DIVINE*, and all of them *EQUAL* in dignity and glory.

But this doctrine of the Trinity the Unitarians utterly deny: not because there is no proof of it in the scriptures; but because it is a doctrine, (as you repeatedly and emphatically pronounce in your Letter and Remarks,) "*perplexing,*" "*mysterious,*" and not to be "*understood.*"

The doctrine of the Trinity, we hold to be important, fundamentally important, in relation especially to the general doctrine of redemption and salvation revealed in the gospel. In the gospel, the Son, Jesus Christ, is revealed as our Re-

deemer and Saviour; the Holy Spirit, as our Sanctifier and Comforter. But who is Jesus Christ, and who is the Holy Spirit? With what feelings and affections, with what expectations and hopes, with what kind and degree of reverence and confidence, is it suitable that we should regard the one and the other? What is the nature, and what the extent of the work which they severally perform for us? and what the nature, and the extent of our obligations to them? These are most interesting questions: questions not merely of a speculative nature, but of the first practical concernment, of the very highest religious importance. But by each of these questions we are directly referred to the doctrine of the Trinity; and to each of them infinitely different answers will be given, by those who believe, and those who disbelieve, this doctrine.

Who then is Jesus Christ? The apostle John in the first of his gospel, says, *“IN THE BEGINNING WAS THE WORD, and the Word was with God, and THE WORD WAS GOD. ALL THINGS WERE MADE BY HIM, AND WITHOUT HIM WAS NOT ANY THING MADE THAT WAS MADE.”* In the close of his first Epistle, he says *“THIS IS THE TRUE GOD, and eternal life.* St. Paul also speaks of *“OUR GREAT GOD and Saviour JESUS CHRIST;”* calls HIM, *“GOD OVER ALL BLESSED FOREVERMORE;”* and says that *“all things were made BY HIM and FOR HIM.”* Language of similar import is familiar to the sacred writers; who as before intimated, most abundantly and expressly ascribe to Jesus Christ DIVINE names, titles, attributes, works, and honours. Upon authority such as this, we believe that the Son is essentially divine,—essentially equal to the Father.—And believing this, we feel ourselves warranted and bound to regard Him with all the feelings and affections, hopes and expectations, reverence and confidence, which a Saviour of infinite perfections, of illimitable riches of grace and of glory, can inspire or claim. The scriptures, however, teach us further, that the same *“WORD,”*—who *“was in the beginning with God and was God,”*—*“was made FLESH and dwelt among us;”* that *“HE took on HIM THE SEED OF ABRAHAM,”*—*“was MADE OF A WOMAN, made under the law;”* that though being in THE FORM OF GOD, he thought

not robbery to be EQUAL WITH GOD; yet he made himself of no reputation, AND TOOK UPON HIM THE FORM OF A SERVANT, AND WAS MADE IN THE LIKENESS OF MEN; and being found in fashion AS A MAN, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." We therefore believe that, in the person of the Son, GOD *was manifest in THE FLESH*, in our own nature; that, in the person of Jesus Christ, God and man were united. And here we see a foundation for all that is said in the scriptures, importing an inequality of the Son to the Father. The Son was *subordinate* to the Father in *office*, as he was pleased to take upon him the form of a servant; and he was *inferiour* to the Father in respect of his *human nature*. Viewing Him, then, in his two natures, divine and human, we see a perfect consistency, in his being represented, as he is in the scriptures, both as God and man; as *essentially* equal to the Father, and yet in other respects unequal. This *union*, again, we acknowledge to be a mystery, which we pretend not to comprehend; but as we find it revealed in the word of God, we feel ourselves bound to believe it, as a most interesting and important truth.

But this doctrine also the Unitarians deny. They deny the true Divinity of the Son, Jesus Christ; and hold him to be a mere creature: some of them, a creature of more than angelick dignity; others, no more than a mere man. The Saviour's divinity, however, as must appear from the brief statement now made, is denied, not because there is no proof of it in the scriptures, understood in their most obvious and harmonious sense; but because, like the doctrine of the Trinity of which it is a branch, and with which it must stand or fall, it involves mysteries which the human understanding cannot explain or comprehend, and which, therefore, according to the leading canon of Unitarian criticism, before cited, are not to be received as truth.*

* Upon the words of our Saviour, John vi, 62. "*What and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was before.*" Dr. Priestley, remarks, "Though not satisfied with any interpretation that has been given of this extraordinary passage, yet *rather than believe* our Saviour to have existed in any other state before the creation of the world, or to have left some state of great dignity and happiness when he came hither, he *would have recourse* to the old and exploded Socinian idea of Christ's actual ascent into heaven, or of his imagining that he had been

Jesus Christ is revealed as our Redeemer and Saviour. But what is the nature, and what the extent of his work, in these interesting characters? According to the scriptures, He is *"the Lamb of God that TAKETH AWAY THE SIN of the world."* His *"flesh was given for the LIFE of the world;"*—his *"blood was shed for many, FOR THE REMISSION OF SINS."* He *"was OFFERED TO BEAR THE SINS OF MANY."* He *"was made a CURSE FOR US, and BORE OUR SINS IN HIS OWN BODY ON THE TREE. He "was delivered FOR OUR OFFENCES, and raised again FOR OUR JUSTIFICATION."* *"In him we have REDEMPTION THROUGH HIS BLOOD, the FORGIVENESS OF SINS, according to the RICHES OF HIS GRACE."* He *"gave himself for us, AN OFFERING AND A SACRIFICE TO GOD."* *"He appeared to put away sin BY THE SACRIFICE OF HIMSELF;"*—and he is THE PROPITIATION, the expiatory sacrifice, FOR OUR SINS, and not for ours only, but also FOR THE SINS OF THE WHOLE WORLD." *"Not by the blood of goats and calves, but by HIS OWN BLOOD, he entered in once into the holy place, having OBTAINED ETERNAL REDEMPTION FOR US;"* wherefore *"HE IS ABLE TO SAVE THEM TO THE UTMOST that came unto God BY HIM, seeing he ever liveth TO MAKE INTERCESSION FOR THEM."* *"This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner. NEITHER IS THERE SALVATION IN ANY OTHER; for THERE IS NONE OTHER NAME UNDER HEAVEN GIVEN AMONG MEN WHEREBY WE MUST BE SAVED."* In these, Sir, and the passages to the same effect with which the scriptures abound, we see the foundation of all our hopes for eternity. This foundation is *Jesus Christ*—JESUS CHRIST CRUCIFIED. Upon this divine testimony, so explicit and so abundant, we believe that the death of Jesus Christ was a vicarious atonement, a propitiatory sacrifice for sin: and that

carried up thither in a vision; which like that of St. Paul, *he had not been able to distinguish from a reality;* nay, he would not build an article of faith, of such magnitude on the correctness of *John's* recollection and representation of our Lord's language; and so strange and incredible does the hypothesis of a pre-existent state appear, that sooner than admit it, he would suppose the whole verse to be an interpolation, or that THE OLD APOSTLE DICTATED ONE THING AND HIS AMANUENSIS WROTE ANOTHER." *Letters to Dr. Price, as quoted by Dr. Magee.*

in him we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins, and solely on account of the merits of his blood.

Connected with this doctrine of atonement, and founded upon it, is the doctrine of justification by faith. The whole is presented in one concise view, in the third of Romans. "Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them that are under the law, *that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world become guilty before God.* Therefore BY THE DEEDS OF THE LAW, THERE SHALL NO FLESH BE JUSTIFIED *in his sight*; for by the law is the knowledge of sin. *But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all THEM THAT BELIEVE*; for there is no difference: *for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God: being justified FREELY OF HIS GRACE, THROUGH THE REDEMPTION THAT IS IN CHRIST JESUS, WHOM GOD HATH SET FORTH TO BE A PROPITIATION THROUGH FAITH IN HIS BLOOD, to declare his righteousness, for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time his righteousness; THAT HE MIGHT BE JUST, AND THE JUSTIFIER OF HIM WHICH BELIEVETH IN JESUS.*"

But all this is denied by Unitarians. I do not mean that they utterly discard and would obliterate the sacred passages here cited, and all others of similar import; but, conformably to the rule and the practice of the Polish Unitarians, as before quoted from Mosheim, "they modify, curtail, and file down" these passages, or the momentous doctrine contained in them, "in such a manner, by the transforming power of art and argument, as to answer the extent of their limited faculties." The doctrine of a propitiatory sacrifice by Christ's death, of redemption through his blood, of the forgiveness of sins and justification on account of his vicarious merits they reject, as unreasonable in itself, inconsistent with the goodness of God, and derogatory to the character of man.—"Christ being a man," says Dr. Priestley,* "who suffered and died in the best of causes, *there is nothing so very differ-*

* Theol. Rep. vol. i, p. 89.

ent in the occasion and manner of his death, from that of others who suffered and died after him in the same cause of christianity, but that their sufferings and death may be considered in the same light with his." Again he says,* "Repentance and a good life are of themselves sufficient to recommend us to the divine favour." "In this," then he says again,† (that is in the notion that Christ's death had no relation to the forgiveness of sins) "let us acquiesce, not doubting but that, *though not perhaps at present*, we shall in time be able, without any EFFORT OR STRAINING, to explain all particular expressions in the Apostolical Epistles:" a plain confession, that it is not without "*effort and straining*" that the scriptures are now accommodated to the Unitarian doctrine. "When, (says Mrs. Barbauld,‡) will christians permit themselves to believe, that the same conduct which gains them the approbation of good men here, will secure the favour of heaven hereafter?—When a man, like Dr. Price, is about to resign his soul into the hands of his Maker, he ought to do it not only with a reliance on his mercy, but his *justice*. It does not become him to pay the blasphemous homage of deprecating the wrath of God, when he ought to throw himself into the arms of his love!"—"Other foundation can no man lay:" (says Dr. Harwood,§ as if with an express design to contradict an apostle.) "All hopes founded upon any thing else than a good moral life, are merely imaginary!" "There can be no proper foundation," says Mr. Belsham,|| "for religious addresses to him, [Christ] nor of gratitude to him for favours now received, nor of confidence in his future interpositions in our behalf!" It were easy to fill many pages with passages to this general effect, selected from the writings of Unitarians.

Concerning the Holy Spirit, my limits do not allow me to be particular. Suffice it to say, that while orthodox christians believe that He, like the Father and the Son, is truly and essentially divine,—and that all which is truly holy and virtuous in any of mankind is to be ascribed to his sovereign and gracious

* Hist of Corrup. of Christianity, vol. i, p. 155. † Theol Rep. vol i, p. 214.

‡ Remarks on Wakefield.

§ Sermons, as quoted by Dr. Fuller.

|| Review of Wilberforce.

agency; both the one and the other of these doctrines are denied by Unitarians. "In popular language, says Mr. Belsham,* the virtuous affections of virtuous men, are, with great propriety ascribed to God; and the pious writers of the scriptures have often adopted this form of expression. Whether they themselves believed in the existence of frequent and supernatural impressions upon the mind, does not clearly appear; and *it is certain that they no where affirm that it constituted any part of their commission, to teach this EXTRAORDINARY AND IMPROBABLE DOCTRINE.*"

I mean not, Sir, to say or to intimate, that you, or any of your liberal brethren here would adopt all the expressions, or all the sentiments, now cited from Unitarian writers. I know that Unitarianism has its degrees and diversities, and is a variable and mutable thing. Dr. Priestley says of himself, that he was once "a Calvinist and that of the straitest sect;" that afterwards he "became an high Arian, and in a little time a Socinian of the lowest kind, in which Christ is considered as a mere man, the Son of Joseph and Mary, and naturally as fallible and peccable as Moses or any other prophet;" and even then he wished it to be understood, that he did "not know when his creed would be fixed." It is easier and safer to say what Unitarians do *not* believe, than what they *do*. The sentiments however, here exhibited, in contrast with orthodox doctrines, are *Unitarian*; and it is not to be forgotten that we are required to hold in christian fellowship, those Unitarians who go to all these lengths, as well as those who do not.

My design in the sketch now given, was not to go into a defence of the doctrines called orthodox, or into a refutation of the Unitarian system; (a design which I am fully aware would require a volume rather than a pamphlet;) but to exhibit in a more specifick and connected manner than I had before done, some of the principal points of difference between these two classes; and to present a summary view of the grounds on which they respectively stand.

Now, Sir, are these differences inconsiderable and unimportant? And is it proper to represent them as consisting only

* Review of Wilberforce, p. 78.

in a “metaphysical” point, or a mere “sound?”—If the scriptures entire were given by inspiration of God, and ought to be received with all reverence and humility, as having his seal to all the doctrines which they teach, as well as to all the precepts which they inculcate; is it a light thing to deny them this supreme authority, and to subject them to the test of feeble, erring reason, and to the ordeal of arrogant, philosophical criticism? * If the doctrine of the Trinity is revealed in the word of God; if it rests on the sure foundation of divine testimony; is it a light thing to reject this doctrine, because it transcends the limited faculties of the human mind; and to pronounce it *irrational and absurd*, because we cannot comprehend it? Though we cannot by searching find out God unto perfection; yet may we not assuredly believe that He knows himself, and the mode of his own existence? and may we not safely rely on what he reveals respecting himself, though there be something relating to it, and beyond it, which we cannot understand? If Jesus Christ is truly and essentially divine, and all men are required to “*honour the Son, even as they honour the Father;*” is it a light thing to deny his divinity, to refuse to him all divine honours, and to regard and treat him only as a mere creature? If, though he thought it no robbery to be equal with God, yet for the salvation of lapsed and lost mankind, he came down from heaven, took upon him the form of a servant, was made in the likeness of men, and became obedient unto death even the death of the cross, as an offering and sacrifice, for the sins of the world; is it a light thing to deny this doctrine of atonement,—to refuse to acknowledge that stupendous display of divine wisdom, condescension and love which it reveals, which the inspired writers celebrate in the most exalted strains of gratitude and praise, and to which all the multitude of saints before the throne of God and the Lamb, ascribe their redemption from eternal perdition to immortal life and glory! If Jesus Christ crucified

* Let me not be understood to speak in any disparagement of fair and legitimate biblical criticism. I honour the labours of Kennicott, De Rossi, Michaelis, Griesbach, Lowth, and many others who have distinguished themselves in this useful field. It is such criticism only, as has for its object to mutilate, and explain away the scriptures, and to shape their doctrines in accommodation to human feelings and views, that I mean to reprobate.

is the only foundation of good hope to men; if there is no other name by which men must or can be saved; if forgiveness of sin and justification unto life can be obtained, only through the merits of his sacrifice, and by faith in his blood; is it a light thing to reject this doctrine, to refuse this way of pardon and of life, and to trust for acceptance with God and everlasting happiness, on any other ground?

Suppose a church founded on these doctrines, in the act of celebrating the death of the Lord Jesus at his table. They unite in worshipping the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; in adoring Christ as their almighty Saviour, and gratefully ascribing the forgiveness of their sins, their acceptance with God, and all their immortal hopes entirely to his propitiatory sacrifice; and in devoutly acknowledging the Holy Spirit as their Sanctifier and Comforter, and praising Him as the efficient Producer in them of all holy affections and consolations. Can a Unitarian, who denies all these doctrines, have communion with the church in this solemn and interesting scene. Must it not be to him a scene of abominable idolatry; a most delusive and flagitious perversion of the sacred institution?—In regard to the whole, the doctrines and the worship founded upon them, is he not an unbeliever?

Let us change the scene. Suppose a church of Unitarians, (say, if you please, low Unitarians) at the table of the holy supper. They refuse to worship the Son and the Holy Ghost: they deny the divinity and atonement of Jesus Christ, and remember him only as a good man, who “suffered and died in the best of causes,” but “in the occasion and manner of whose death there was nothing very different from that of others who suffered and died after him in the same cause;” and they professedly rely for eternal life, not on the Saviour’s merits, but on their own “good moral lives,” and declare, “that all hopes founded on any thing else are merely imaginary.” What has an orthodox christian to do with such a communion? Can he join in divesting his adored Saviour of his glory,—in profaning the sacred memorial of his dying love,—in making “*his blood an unholy thing!*”

We assume, we claim no dictation, no control over other men’s consciences. We invade not, we wish not to invade

or to abridge the natural, civil, or religious rights of any man or class of men. We rejoice in the civil, and still more in the religious freedom of our country. We acknowledge the right of every one to think for himself, and to form his own opinions of truth; a right, however, for the unperverted exercise of which every one is solemnly accountable to God.

While we allow this right to others, and claim it for ourselves, we hold it to be perfectly consistent, and our bounden duty, openly and faithfully to declare and inculcate what we believe to be divine truth; firmly and earnestly, yet candidly and benevolently, to contend for what we receive as the faith once delivered to the saints: and to employ all scriptural means to counteract and explode such opinions as we deem erroneous,—such, especially, as we believe to be utterly subversive of the gospel; and to convince and warn all people, of their delusive nature and their destructive tendency. *And we think it neither charitable nor reasonable,—we hold it, indeed, entirely incompatible with our liberty of conscience, and our right of private judgment, that we should be required to think favourably of such opinions, to refrain from bearing our testimony against them, or to regard them as no obstruction to christian fellowship.*

We are not so happy as to have the belief, which you so confidently express, that, “the great principles, for which the apostles contended, are now received with little dispute in christian communities.” We “sincerely believe” on the contrary, that those doctrines were the very same, for which we are now contending. We believe that the Gospel of John and his first and second Epistles, all which were written after controversies arose among professed christians, concerning the person and character of Jesus Christ, had particular respect to those controversies; and were particularly designed to establish the faith of the churches, in both his true Divinity and humanity. We believe that the Epistles of Paul to the Romans and Galatians, had for their primary and principle object, the vindication and establishment of the cardinal doctrine of justification, “freely by grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus; whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood;” in opposi-

tion to such professed christians as denied this doctrine, and "went about to establish their own righteousness;" and that the divine dignity, the high priesthood and expiatory sacrifice of Christ, and salvation only through his one offering for sin, and by faith in him, constitute the subject of his entire Epistle to the Hebrews. We believe, in a word, that these are the very doctrines of *the cross*, WHICH WERE "TO THE JEWS A STUMBLING BLOCK, AND TO THE GREEKS FOOLISHNESS;" and we deeply deplore the affecting fact, of which we see most abundant evidence, that there is, in our own age, and in our own country, the same spirit of hostility to these doctrines, which was so awfully and fatally displayed in the days of the apostles. With deep impressions, and the most painful emotions, we remember the solemn word, "*Unto them which be disobedient, the STONE which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner, and a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient.*"

The event of the present controversy, I would submissively leave with Him, whose truth, and whose glory are deeply concerned in it. Most sincerely do I lament the uncommon animosities which have been excited, and the uncommon manner in which they have been displayed. True, it has always been the fact, that when error has been exposed, the passions which have clung to it have been disturbed; but it most solemnly concerns us all, on the one side and on the other, to look well to our tempers, to our words, and to our actions,—remembering that we are ere long to *stand together before the judgment seat of CHRIST*. Notwithstanding, however, the present excitement, and the heavy guilt incurred by many, it is devoutly to be hoped that shortly the passions of the day will subside, and give place to serious reflection and candid inquiry; that people will consider the questions in debate, as being of a nature too momentous, to be hastily decided by private attachments or antipathies, by party spirit or prejudice—by any thing indeed other than reason and conscience and scripture; and will attend to these questions, with all the earnestness which their everlasting importance

demands, with humble dependence on the Spirit of grace, and with sincere and unfailing desires to know and obey the truth.

With fervent prayers for a consummation so happy, and for your joy as well as my own in the event, I am,

Rev. and dear Sir,

Yours, with sincere affection and respect,

S. WORCESTER.

Salem, August 26, 1815.

POSTSCRIPT.

DR. Watts, in the preface to his *Glory of Christ*, one of his latest publications, says, "Though we learn from Scripture that TRUE AND PROPER DEITY is ascribed to the FATHER, THE SON, AND THE HOLY SPIRIT, and they are represented often in scripture as *distinct personal agents*; yet after all our inquiries and prayers, we may be still much at a loss to describe exactly, wherein this distinct personality consists, and what is the distinct communion of each of them in the divine nature."—"I can assure them [his readers] that there is not one sentence in all these discourses, but what is very consistent with a firm belief of the *divinity of Christ*, and a just and sincere concern for the most eminent and glorious truths of the gospel, as they are professed by Protestants among us against the *Socinian and Arian errors*."—In these views, so far as appears, Dr. Watts remained to the last.

Respecting Dr. Barnard, I have only to reaffirm what I said before.

A pamphlet by a LAYMAN has come to hand, just in season to receive as much attention as it seems to require. The pamphlet bears this title, "*Are you a Christian or a Calvinist? Or, Do you prefer the authority of Christ to that of the Genevan Reformer?*" Whatever in this publication concerns me, and the cause which I have espoused, has been almost entirely anticipated, and, as I believe, sufficiently answered, in the foregoing Letter.

The title, the spirit, the whole tenour, import that Calvinists are not Christians. I am not in the least angered by

this; nor do I apprehend that any of my brethren implicated, will think that they would do well to be angry, or will feel themselves called upon to express, even “a virtuous indignation.” If the Layman and his party really believe that Calvinists are not christians, they have my full and most hearty consent to declare it with the utmost freedom; nor will I contend with them at all about their consistency in claiming to be thought most charitable, in entertaining and expressing this opinion, and in continually denouncing us as being utterly devoid of charity.

“I expect,” says this unknown writer, the “intolerant among the disciples of Calvin will be ready to consign a layman to the fate of *‘unregenerate reprobates,’* who shall dare to intermeddle with the sacred mysteries of their faith.” The gentleman, I believe, need give himself no concern on this score. “Their master,” he proceeds to say, “would never suffer any one to question his doctrines under pain of the fagot. He wished to dethrone the Pope, only that he might put the tiara on his own head. His disciples in *this* country, and in this alone, retain the same spirit.”—These are the first sentences. To these I will add a quotation from the 6th page. “The orthodox believe in Calvin and the Westminster Assembly; the liberal christians in Christ and his apostles. The former are Calvinists—the latter are christians. Yet so intolerant and unreasonable are the party who have arrogated to themselves the title of orthodox, that they venture to deny the name and title of christians to the followers of Christ, and apply it exclusively to the followers of Calvin, and of human councils, assemblies, and creed-makers.” Those who have not the opportunity or inclination to read the pamphlet, may rely on these quotations, not only as a fair specimen, but as containing the sum and substance, the pith and marrow of the whole. Such is the “document” which this writer is careful to let us know it was his intention “to furnish” to be deposited in the archives “of our historical societies and the alcoves of our colleges:” a monument more durable than brass, to proclaim and exemplify to the generations to come, the talent and taste, the truth and argument, the correctness and wisdom, the dignity and urbanity, the meekness and modesty, the candour and

charity of the liberal men of Massachusetts "in the beginning of the nineteenth century."

The Layman states, or intimates, more than once, that I deny, and endeavour to prove, that the Reviewer did not charge the liberal clergy and party with "hypocritical concealment;" and upon this he bestows many words. I said, however, explicitly, "I mean not to deny that the Reviewer does charge ministers, and perhaps others, of the party called liberal, with want of openness and clearness; nay, with designed concealment and culpable disguise."

P. 12. the Layman says, "We agree with Dr. Worcester, and we are happy to agree with him in some points, that south of Massachusetts there is very little freedom of religious opinion. Men must think as they are bid, not as they believe." How the gentleman came to know this to be my opinion, I will not attempt to divine; but sure I am, he can find not the slightest intimation of any thing of this sort, not the most distant reference to the people south of Massachusetts in my Letter.

For an answer to the main scope and argument of his pamphlet, I beg leave to refer the Layman to pp. 11—14, 22—25, and 28—40 of the foregoing Letter.

What is principally to be apprehended by me and my brethren, of danger to *ourselves* and our cause from the Layman's attempt is, that we shall not duly remember, that "*charity rejoiceth not in iniquity; but rejoiceth in the truth.*" We have strong temptation to rejoice in this publication. This shower of "poisoned arrows" has not reached *us*. I confess, however, I like the Layman's openness. He conceals neither his sentiments, nor his spirit, his party prejudices nor his private enmities, his designs nor his resources;—nothing but his name.

"Alack; 'tis he! why he was met even now
 "As mad as the vex'd sea: singing aloud;
 "Crown'd with rank fumiter, and furrow weeds,
 "With harlocks, hemlock, nettles, cuckoo-flower,
 "Darnel, and all the idle weeds that grow
 "In our sustaining corn."

— — — "That close aspect of his
 "Does shew the mood of a much troubled breast."

REMARKS

ON

THE REV. DR. WORCESTER'S

SECOND

LETTER TO MR. CHANNING,

ON

AMERICAN UNITARIANISM.

BY

WILLIAM E. CHANNING,

(Minister of the Church of Christ in Federal Street.

BOSTON :

PRINTED AND PUBLISHED BY WELLS AND LILLY.

1815.

REMARKS, &c.

THOSE who have read the second letter addressed to me by Dr. Worcester, will not be surprised at the appearance of these remarks. I intended to leave the controversy to the decision of the publick, who, I thought, were in possession of all the materials requisite to the formation of a correct judgment. But Dr. Worcester has called on me to retract what he pronounces a "flagrant misstatement" of an important part of his letter; and he has done this with a solemnity, which hardly permits me to observe the silence on which I had resolved. These remarks will relate primarily to that point, but I shall not restrain myself from offering observations on other parts of his letter.

Dr. Worcester has complained with much earnestness, that I have imputed to him, in my former remarks, a "bad spirit and intention." To this I answer, that I really did consider his letter as very unworthy of him as a christian and a christian minister. I did think, that if the principles of his letter could be reduced to practice, every Unitarian would be driven from the church, and every minister of Unitarian sentiments would be driven from the pulpit. I did think, that he discovered a strange insensibility towards his brethren, whose moral purity had been so wantonly assailed in the Review of the Panoplist. I also acknowledge, that I did not discover any marks of that affection and respect towards myself, of which he speaks in his second letter. Believing that his remarks directly tended to divide the church, and to expose a respectable body of christians to reproach and injurious treatment, I

spoke of this tendency with plainness, but without bitterness or anger. Whether my interpretation of Dr. Worcester's letter, in these respects, was unauthorized, I cheerfully leave to the decision of those who have read it. My own impressions have coincided with those of all around me ; and I cannot believe, that I have not one friend of a candid mind, and of sufficient ability to decide on the obvious import of a letter written in our native tongue.

Dr. Worcester, however, disclaims the feelings and intentions which I have ascribed to him. He professes to have been governed by respect and affection towards me, and by a spirit of forbearance, kindness, tenderness, and undissembled good will towards his brethren. That Dr. Worcester is sincere in reporting what *now* appears to him to have been the state of his mind during the composition of his first letter, I am far from denying. But on a subject like this, memory is sometimes treacherous ; and I confess I cannot shake off the conviction, that some improper feelings, perhaps unsuspected by Dr. Worcester, occasionally guided his pen. But I mean not to pursue this point. I have not the least disposition to attribute to Dr. Worcester any intentions which he disclaims. I had much rather believe, that his style is unhappy, than that his temper is evil. Most sincerely do I wish, that his heart may be a stranger to every unworthy sentiment, that his life may be adorned with every virtue, and be crowned with every blessing.

THE CHARGE OF " FLAGRANT MISSTATEMENT."

I now come to my great object. In my former remarks, I observed, that Dr. Worcester " has solemnly and publicly given all his influence to the opinion, that we, and all who agree with us on the subject of the Trinity, are to be disowned by the

“ church of Christ. The obvious import of the concluding part of his letter, (and it is the obvious import, and not a strained and circuitous interpretation which I regard,) may be thus expressed. ‘ Every man who cannot admit as a doctrine of scripture, the great doctrine of three persons in one God, which I and other orthodox christians embrace, believes an opposite gospel, rejects the true gospel, despises the authority of Jesus Christ, is, of course, a man wholly wanting in true piety, and without christian virtue, and may, in perfect consistency with christian love, be rejected as unworthy the name of a christian.’ ” On this representation of his sentiments, Dr. Worcester thus remarks, “ Your statement of the import of the concluding part of my letter is most palpably incorrect and unjust. And though I attribute this incorrectness and injustice not to any injurious intention, but to that habit of thinking and feeling of which I have before taken notice ; yet, after what I have now stated, I think I have a right to call upon you, *and I do solemnly call upon you, to retract this flagrant misstatement.* I know, indeed, you have given it to be understood, that you shall not write again ; but, Sir, the publick disputant, who makes this resolve, ought to be careful, not merely not to put down aught in malice, but to write nothing which justice to his opponent and to the cause of truth—nothing which the sacred principles of christianity will require him to retract.”

This is the charge, which has again brought me before the publick, the charge of *palpable incorrectness and injustice*, and of *flagrant misstatement*. I now intend fairly and fully to meet it. I intend to show, that in giving this interpretation, I followed the natural meaning of Dr. Worcester’s words, that I put no violence on his language, and that no other sense

would have offered itself to an unprejudiced mind. I shall state the passages which led to the representation which I have formed, beginning with those which are least decisive, as these first present themselves in the letter, and requesting the reader to form his judgment, not from a part, but from the whole which shall be presented to him.

In page 24, of Dr. Worcester's letter, I found the following quotation from scripture, with the subjoined remark: "St. Peter says, 'There were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction.' If this language sound harsh and unfashionable," Dr. Worcester continues, "I trust, Sir, you will have the goodness not to impute the fault to me; or that you will not on account of any unpleasantness in the language, refuse to give attention to the momentous sentiment contained in it." I did consider this text of scripture, followed by this remark, as intended by Dr. Worcester to be applied to my brethren and to myself, and to hold us up to the community as false teachers, who have brought in *damnable* heresies, who have *denied the Lord that bought us*, and who are bringing on ourselves *swift destruction*. I believed that every reader would give this application to the passage, and that some would be confirmed by it in denying to all Unitarian ministers the christian character. Dr. Worcester has frankly acknowledged the impropriety of the remark which follows the text; and I introduce it now, not for the sake of casting on him the slightest reproach, but simply to state the impression which it naturally communicated; at the time when my remarks were written.

In page 24, Dr. Worcester speaks of "the doctrines on which we differ," as "doctrines which

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“immediately affect the very foundations of our faith;” and he adds, that “a true faith is the vital principle of all holy practice, and of all the works which are good and acceptable in the sight of God.” I understood this passage as strongly intimating, that Unitarian principles shake the *very foundation* of all holy practice, and of all good works.

In page 24, I met the following remarkable passage: “*The God* whom you worship, is different from *ours*,” and a little below, “if we are wrong in regard to the object of our worship, we can hardly be right in *any* part of our religion.” I understood this passage as strongly intimating, that the whole religion of Unitarians is rendered worthless, by their departure from the “orthodox,” on the subject of the Trinity.

Page 29, I met the following passage, which seemed to me to admit but one construction. Dr. Worcester is speaking of the different schemes of Mr. Belsham, and of “orthodox christians;” and he says, “One or the other of these schemes must be what St. Paul denominates ‘another gospel,’ and against which and its abettors he solemnly pronounces his apostolick anathema.” Which of these two schemes Dr. Worcester intended to mark out as “another gospel,” is a question which no reader of his letter will wish me to discuss. Who doubts that it was Mr. Belsham’s? Against this scheme then, and against its abettors, the apostolick *curse* is pronounced. This I certainly understood to be Dr. Worcester’s meaning, and I see not what other sense the passage will bear. I also had not a doubt that Dr. Worcester in representing the abettors of Mr. Belsham’s scheme as *accursed*, intended to represent them as wholly destitute of piety and christian virtue, for this I naturally conceived was implied in the curse of God. Dr. Worcester indeed says, that

he did not draw this inference, but it seemed to me too plain to need the formality of a deduction. I believe, that this will be granted by all to be the plain sense of his words—But it may be said that this passage only includes the followers of Mr. Belsham. Let the reader observe Dr. Worcester's phraseology. He does not say *followers*, but *abettors*. Let the reader then look back to pages 10 and 11 of Dr. Worcester's letter. He will there find Dr. Worcester very strongly intimating that the *liberal party generally* are partakers in the deeds and guilt of Mr. Belsham, because they bear no decided testimony against them. The natural import, then, of this passage is, not only that Mr. Belsham in particular, but that the liberal party in general, fall under the *apostolick curse*. But the next passage is still more decisive.

Page 32, I met the following passage. "Is it
 "a violation of the great law of love for the friends of
 "truth to decline communion with its rejecters? We
 "have nothing to do here with slight diversities of
 "opinion; with differences about modes or forms, or
 "inconsiderable points of faith or practice. Our con-
 "cern is with differences of a radical and fundamental
 "nature; such as exist between orthodox Christians
 "and Unitarians of all degrees, even down to the
 "creed of Mr. Belsham: for to this point you have
 "yourself fairly reduced the present question. Yes,
 "Sir, the simple point here at issue is, Whether it
 "be a violation of the law of love, for believers in
 "the true Gospel of Jesus Christ, to separate from
 "believers in another and an opposite gospel? If
 "*yours* is the true Gospel, then *ours* is another; if
 "*ours* is the true Gospel, then *yours* is another." I
 clearly understood Dr. Worcester, in this passage, as
 saying, that the differences between "*orthodox Chris-*
 "*tians*" and *Unitarians* are radical and fundamental,

and that *I* and *my brethren* and *Unitarians of all degrees* hold "another gospel," and even an opposite gospel to the true. I understood too, that as he considered Mr. Belsham and his abettors as *accursed* because they had "another gospel," he intended to represent me, and all who agree with me in rejecting the "orthodox" doctrine of the Trinity, as also falling under the apostle's curse, because he represents our gospel not only as "another" but as opposite to the true gospel. I also understood his pointed interrogations as strongly teaching, that the "friends of truth" (a phrase never doubtful in Dr. Worcester's mouth) may separate themselves from us and decline communion with us, without any "violation of Christian love." What other interpretation this passage can bear, I confess myself as yet unable to conceive.

Page 33, I met with a passage which also seemed to me very plain and decisive. Dr. Worcester asks, "Would it conduce more to the promotion of truth, for the believers in the true gospel, to hold fellowship with the believers in another gospel, than to separate from them? We have seen in what way only this fellowship can be maintained. If it is to be maintained, the *principal doctrines of the gospel* must cease to be clearly preached; divine worship must cease to be conducted on principles distinguishingly Christian, &c. &c. But is this the way, Sir, to promote the truth in the church and the world? Is it not rather the way to *extinguish* the *light of the ministry*, the *light of the church*, the *light of the world*, to throw back the children of light into darkness and *the shadow of death*, and to leave the *prince of darkness* to triumph in an *unlimited and undisturbed empire*?" I thought this passage very plain. I understood Dr. Worcester as saying, that were "orthodox Christians" to wave in their preaching and in publick worship those peculiarities which

are disapproved by Unitarians, the light of the gospel would be put out, the ministry would be useless, Christians would fall back into the shadow of death, and Satan would rule the minds of men without *any limitation* or *any disturbance* to his power. In other words, I understood Dr. Worcester as saying, that where a Unitarian ministry and worship are established, the minds of men are *altogether* unenlightened by the gospel, and are abandoned wholly to the sway of the prince of darkness. This is indeed a horrible sentiment.—But as yet I see no explanation of the passage by which it can be avoided.

I now come to the last passage which I shall quote, found in page 35. “Sir, the differences, which exist “between the Unitarians and the orthodox christians “are certainly of a nature to demand the most serious and earnest attention. They concern most “directly and essentially the glory of God, the honour of the Saviour, the welfare of the church, and “the salvation of men. In comparison with these, “the difference between Dissenters and Episcopalians, between Pædo-baptists and Anti-pædo-baptists, are matters of mere feature and complexion. “Utterly in vain is the attempt to put these differences out of light, to conceal their magnitude and “momentous consequences; or by a raised cry of “bigotry, illiberality, and intolerance, to divert the “publick attention from them. They must and will “be fearlessly discussed and seriously considered; “and ministers, and churches, professed christians, “and all others must and will be brought to the “solemn decision—whether they will be *for Christ*, “*or against him*; whether they will receive and hold “fast his truth, or *despise and reject* it; whether they “will bow to his authority, and trust in his grace, or “*refuse to have him to reign over them, and contemn his salvation.*” This passage seemed to me perfectly plain when I wrote my remarks, and I am yet

unable to give it a different interpretation. Dr. Worcester speaks in this passage of Unitarians in the broadest sense of the word, of Unitarians as opposed to "orthodox christians," *i. e.* of all who reject the "orthodox" doctrine of the Trinity. He says that the differences between this class and the "orthodox" concern most directly and *essentially* the *salvation* of men; that these differences, in spite of clamour and concealment, will be fearlessly discussed; and that in deciding on these differences, in choosing between these parties, men will in fact decide whether they will be *for Christ*, will receive and bow to his truth, or will be *against him*, will *despise* his truth and salvation, and *refuse* to have him to reign over him. I thought this passage too obvious to admit dispute. I understood Dr. Worcester as charging Unitarians of all degrees with contempt and rejection of the authority of Jesus Christ, and of course, with entire destitution of piety and christian virtue.

I have selected several passages from Dr. Worcester's letter, which appear to me to vindicate entirely the statement which I made of his sentiments. Let me now ask the reader to examine them in the connexion in which they stand. He will find nothing thrown in by Dr. Worcester to restrain their natural import; *not one word* expressive of charity for Unitarians *of any class*; not one word to soften the severity of his censure. His whole reasonings and interrogations appeared to me to have one bearing, to breathe one spirit, and left me without a doubt as to his real meaning.

I can further say that there was nothing in the state of my mind unfavourable to a fair interpretation of Dr. Worcester's letter. I regarded him as a man of candour and moderation. I expected nothing like exclusion and denunciation. Seldom have I known a more cruel disappointment than in reading

his first letter. To this I can add, that among those with whom I have conversed, I have found but one sentiment in regard to his meaning. I cannot therefore believe, that my prejudices have blinded me, and that I am chargeable with "palpable and flagrant misstatement."

Dr. Worcester however assures me that I have misrepresented him; and I have no disposition to question the sincerity, with which he now declares, that he did not intend to communicate the sentiments which I ascribed to him. I cannot indeed avoid the belief, that his recollections on this point are imperfect, and that in the hurry of his thoughts and feelings, he was not so watchful over his motives as he now imagines. With this, however, I have no concern. I am satisfied with having shown, that my interpretation was natural, and indeed unavoidable, and I cheerfully record the protest of Dr. Worcester against this interpretation. I am pleased to witness the sensibility with which he repels the charge of denying to Anti-Trinitarians all piety and virtue. I observe in this a degree of candour of which I could not discern the faintest ray in his first letter.

DR. WORCESTER'S CONCESSION IN FAVOUR OF DR.
CLARKE.

There is another part of Dr. Worcester's letter which also gave me some pleasure. I refer to that part, in which he expresses some charitable sentiments towards Dr. Samuel Clarke. He tells us, "that he is by no means prepared to say that every one who adopts Dr. Clarke's views of the Trinity rejects the true gospel, embraces another, and is devoid of christian faith and virtue." Now if he will act consistently with these sentiments, and with the charitable dispositions which he seems inclined to exercise towards the author of "Bible News,"

the controversy between us will soon end. As far as I understand the prevalent sentiments among liberal christians in this quarter of our country, they appear to me substantially to agree with the views of these excellent men; and were we required to select human leaders in religion, I believe, that we should range ourselves under their standard in preference to any other. Dr. Clarke believed, that the Father alone is the Supreme God, and that Jesus Christ is not the Supreme God, but derived his being, and all his power and honours from the Father, even from an act of the Father's power and will. He maintains, that as the scriptures have not taught us the manner in which the Son derived his existence from his Father, it is presumptuous to affirm, that the Son was created, or, that there was a time when he did not exist. On these subjects the word of God has not given us light, and therefore we ought to be silent. The author of "Bible News," in like manner affirms, that the Father only is the Supreme God, that Jesus is a distinct being from God, and that he derives every thing from his Father. He has some views relating to the "proper Sonship" of God, which neither liberal nor "orthodox" christians generally embrace. But the prevalent sentiments of liberal christians seem to me to accord substantially with the systems I have above described. Like Dr. Clarke, the majority of this class feel that the scriptures have not taught the mode of Christ's derivation. They therefore do not call Christ a creature, but leave the subject in the obscurity in which they find it, carrying with them, however, an impression, that the scriptures ascribe to Jesus the character of Son of God in a peculiarly high sense, and in a sense in which it is ascribed to no other being. With respect to the ATONEMENT, the great body of liberal christians seem to me to accord pre-

cisely with the author of "Bible News," or rather both agree very much with the profound Butler. Both agree, that Jesus Christ, by his sufferings and intercession, obtains forgiveness for sinful men, or that on account, or in consequence of what Christ has done and suffered, the punishment of sin is averted from the penitent, and blessings, forfeited by sin, are bestowed. On the question which is often asked, how the death of Christ has this blessed influence, they generally think that the scriptures have given us little light, and that it is the part of wisdom to accept the kind appointment of God, without constructing theories for which the materials must be chiefly borrowed from our own imagination.

My motive for making the preceding statement is no other than a desire to contribute whatever may be in my power to the peace of our churches. I have hoped that by this representation, some portion of the charity which has been expressed towards Dr. Clarke, and the author of "Bible News," may be extended towards their Unitarian brethren; and that thus the ecclesiastical division which is threatened may be averted. Let it not, however, be imagined that I or my friends are anxious *on our own account* to extort from the "orthodox" an acknowledgment, that possibly we hold the true gospel, and are not "devoid of christian faith and virtue." We regard other christians as brethren, but can in no degree recognize them as superiours in the church of our common master. We do not dread the censures which they may pass on our honest opinions: We rejoice that we have a higher judge, whose truth it is our labour to learn, obey, and maintain, and whose favour will be distributed by other principles than those which prevail in a prejudiced and shortsighted world. But, whilst we mean not to be suitors to our brethren; we are willing and desirous, by any

fair representations, to save them from a course, which, as we firmly believe, will be injurious to their own characters, injurious to their brethren, unfriendly to the diffusion of the gospel, and highly offensive to our common and benevolent master.

Happy should I be, if by any representation or any honourable concessions on our part, our churches could be preserved from the shock which threatens them. But on this point Dr. Worcester's last letter is as discouraging as the first. He indeed disclaims the intention of denying to Anti-trinitarians all piety and virtue. But the tendency of his letters must be obvious to the humblest understanding, and I doubt not that many carry from them the impression, that Unitarians criminally reject the gospel, and ought to be driven from the church. This effect, whether intended or not, is produced, and for this we hold Dr. Worcester responsible.

THE METHODS OF RENDERING UNITARIANS ODISIOUS.

In his last letter, one great object seems to be, to paint in the strongest colours the differences between Unitarians and Trinitarians, and to produce the most unfavourable impression in regard to the former. To effect this object, he again and again brings forward the views of the lowest Unitarians, and culls the most offensive passages from the works of Dr. Priestley and Mr. Belsham. I know that he throws in a caution against the inference, that all Unitarians are responsible for these views: but I am persuaded, that the effect on common readers is, that they identify this whole class of Christians with Mr. Belsham and Dr. Priestley. Now to this I object. It is well known that every denomination of Christians is broken into various subdivisions. For instance, among those who adopt the great principles of Calvin, are Sandemanians, Antinomians, Fatalists, and I may add, Universalists. Suppose now that in delineating

Calvinism, I should lay the chief stress on these peculiarities. Or suppose, that I should ransack the writings of Trinitarians, should collect all their crude notions and wild explanations of the Trinity, and should bring forward the horrible language, in which some have spoken of God's wrath burning against his Son, and of the blood of Jesus appeasing the fury of the Father. Would not Calvinists and Trinitarians pronounce me unfair, if by such methods I should lead common readers to imagine, that they were generally favourable to these offensive sentiments. It is an indisputable fact, that Dr. Priestley and Mr. Belsham have, comparatively, few followers among the Anti-trinitarian clergy of this country. For myself, I have read very few of the writings of these gentlemen, and chiefly from want of sympathy with their general views. Their theology appears to me very defective, and their theory of materialism and of necessity, which they have attempted to incorporate with their theology, seems to me unfriendly to a sense of responsibility, and to elevation of moral feeling. Are we then to be confounded with the lower Unitarians, because we happen to accord with them in the great point, that the Father alone is the supreme God, and that Jesus Christ derives from him his being and all his powers.—Do any ask me on what ground I admit those, whose theology is so defective, to be Christians? I answer; precisely on the ground on which I acknowledge the Christian character of another denomination, whose *additions* to the simple gospel seem to me at least as exceptionable as the *deficiencies* of their brethren. But what did I say? that *I admit* these men to be Christians! They need no admission of mine. Professing Jesus to be their head, and exhibiting in their lives a reverence for his gospel, they have a place in Christ's church which I did not give, and which neither I nor any other man can take away.

Another method of awakening publick feeling against the Unitarians, is to represent them as obliged by their sentiments to give up the doctrine of the atonement. It is indeed very true, that Unitarians say nothing about *infinite* atonement, and they shudder when they hear, what Dr. Worcester seems to assert, that the ever blessed God suffered and died on the cross. They reject these representations, because they find not one passage in scripture which directly asserts them, or gives them support. Not *one* word do we hear from Christ or his Apostles of an *infinite* atonement. In not *one* solitary text, is the efficacy of Christ's death in obtaining forgiveness, ascribed to his being the Supreme God. All this is theology of man's making, and strongly marked with the hand of its author. But the doctrine of the atonement, taken in the broad sense which I have before stated, is not rejected by Unitarians. In my former letter, I adduced two distinguished Unitarians, Dr. Clarke, and the author of Bible News, in whose valuable writings this doctrine is stated and maintained. Dr. Worcester does not deny the fact, but to my astonishment has attempted to escape its force, by maintaining that these gentlemen do not deny the essential divinity of Jesus Christ, and are therefore not obliged to renounce the atonement. What! Dr. Clarke and Mr. Noah Worcester do not deny the essential divinity of Jesus Christ! I assure Dr. Worcester then, that neither I nor my friends deny it, and that, according to his own language, we are under no necessity of denying the doctrine of the atonement. The fact is, that some of the best works on the atonement have come from the pens of Unitarians. Mr. Tomkins, one of the most zealous Unitarians of his age, and I believe a sufferer for his principles, published a well known treatise, called "Jesus Christ the Mediator," in which the doctrine of atonement is more strenuously insisted on, than even by Dr. Clarke and

Mr. Noah Worcester. Not long ago, there was published in this country, I think under the patronage of Trinitarians, a work on the atonement by Hampton, called "Candid Remarks on Dr. Taylor, &c." which, as I well recollect, appeared to me, when I read it, to be decidedly the production of an Unitarian. It contains not one word about an *infinite* atonement made by the *Supreme God*. The sentiments of the work, I think, accord in the main with the views of many Unitarians in this country. Unitarianism, then, does not exclude the doctrine of atonement.

Another method by which the publick feelings are to be awakened against Unitarians, is the frequent assertion, that they disbelieve the Trinity, because the doctrine is mysterious, and because they prefer reason to revelation, human wisdom to the wisdom of God. Dr. Worcester says to me, "The doctrine of the Trinity the Unitarians utterly deny, *not because there is no proof of it in the Scriptures*, but because it is a doctrine (as you repeatedly and emphatically pronounce) perplexing, mysterious, and not to be understood." What will common readers infer from this, and from other passages in his letter? Why, that we do not rest on scripture, as the ground of our rejection of this doctrine, or at least, that we do not consider the scriptures as very strongly opposed to the Trinity, and that we assail it chiefly with weapons furnished by reason. Now, as far as my knowledge of Unitarian writers extends, this impression is altogether unfounded. We do indeed object to the Trinity, that, as it is often stated, it is an unintelligible proposition; and we say, what I presume Dr. Worcester will as freely say, that it is out of our power to believe a proposition of which we do not *know the meaning*. It is also true, that when the doctrine is stated, as it sometimes is, in words which we understand; when for example we are told by

the pious Howe, that the three persons in God are three minds; we insist that it involves a palpable contradiction, and we argue precisely as the protestants do with the papists, that a doctrine involving a contradiction cannot be from God. But Unitarians never stop here. They always declare that Scripture with one voice disowns the doctrine of the Trinity, and that of all the fictions of theologians, the doctrine of three persons in the one God, has perhaps the least countenance from the Bible. Their writings are *filled* with quotations from Scripture. Some of them, like Dr. Clarke's, consist almost entirely of texts arranged under proper heads. Unitarians believe, and constantly affirm, that no laboured comments and no critical skill are required, to teach common Christians the great truth, that the Father alone is the supreme God, and that Jesus Christ is a derived and dependent being; and they believe and affirm, that the opposite sentiment is chiefly maintained by appeals to men's fears, and by artificial excitement of their feelings. This is the ground taken by all the Unitarians whom I have known, and on this Scripture ground I profess myself to rest. I am not conscious of the least prejudice against the doctrine of the Trinity. My earliest prepossessions must have been in its favour. But in my youth, before I had read a book on the subject, the Scriptures suggested doubts of its truth, and by the study chiefly of the Scriptures, my doubts have grown up into a solid conviction. *The Scriptures*, in my view, are the strength of the Unitarian cause; and I am persuaded, that they are continually extending it in opposition to the strongest influences of education. I have found from conversing with pious people of both sexes, that the Scriptures always gave them the idea, that God and Jesus Christ were distinct beings, and that Jesus derived his being and power from God. They have sometimes told me, that they

have wished to resist this impression, that they have dreaded to depart from principles which were early instilled as essential, that they have shrunk from a doubt of the Trinity as from a sin; but still the language of Scripture has forced them to doubt and disbelieve. This is the history of many minds; and many, I am confident, have buried in silence anxious scruples, which they dared not clothe in words.

I state this with great distinctness and strength, that I may repel and remove a common mistake among Christians, that we reject the Trinity because we cannot reconcile it with reason, although we can hardly help acknowledging it as a Scripture doctrine. It is not because we exalt reason above Scripture, but because we revere the Scriptures, because we fear God, that we maintain Unitarian principles. We *dare* not offer prayers to the Holy Ghost, because we find not *one* command, or *one* example of such worship, in the gospel of our Master; and we honour him too entirely to depart from his plain rules on so important a subject. We read too in the Scriptures such passages as these. "My Father is greater than I." "This is eternal life, that men may know *thee* the ONLY TRUE GOD, and Jesus Christ whom *thou hast sent*." "Of that day and hour knoweth no man, not the angels which are in heaven, *neither the Son*, but THE FATHER, THE FATHER ONLY." "I can do *nothing* of *myself*." "My doctrine is not *mine*, but his who sent me. If any will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, *whether* it be of GOD, or whether I speak *of myself*." We hear these passages from the very lips of our honoured and beloved Lord; and with these passages engraven on our minds, and supported by the whole current of Scripture, we dare not, we *dare not* approach Jesus Christ as the only living, the only true God. It is from reverence for his character and instructions, from fear of offending him, from a conscientiousness

which would prompt us to sacrifice all in his service, that we offer him no homage, but in the character of the SON of the ONLY LIVING AND TRUE GOD.

Another method of awakening the feelings of Christians on the subject of the Trinity, is to address their fears. It is common with Trinitarians, and Dr. Worcester has learned it, to say to people, "*If the Trinity rests on the sure foundation of divine testimony, if Jesus Christ is essentially divine, &c. &c. is it a light thing to reject these doctrines, to refuse to Jesus divine honours, &c. &c.*" Appeals of this kind, which are ordinarily connected with positive assertions of the truth of the Trinity, are worth a thousand arguments, and terrify into silence the doubts which lurk in many minds. I mourn that Christians should think so unworthily of Jesus, as to be moved by this language. This language evidently supposes, that Jesus, our merciful Saviour, overlooks the general temper of our minds, the general obedience of our lives, and, like a jealous sovereign, is prepared to punish every deficiency of homage to himself, however unintentionally the tribute may be withheld, and however sincere and upright the heart which unconsciously withholds it. And is this the character of our merciful Lord? Suppose that a human benefactor, of exalted endowments, were to confer on you some great blessing, and suppose that through ignorance of these endowments, you should not address him with all the terms of homage which they deserve, but should yet be sincerely grateful for the benefit he has conferred, and should love and imitate his excellence as far as it is known? Think you, that he would spurn your imperfect tribute, and drive you from his presence? And will Jesus, whose kindness was stronger than death, who bore so patiently the low views of his disciples, will *he* cast from him those, who at the present day revere his authority, study his word, and labour to derive from

that pure fountain the very truths which he taught respecting himself, and respecting the service which is his due. I am persuaded, that at the last day the Trinitarian will be found in a great error, and were I disposed, I could make as moving an appeal to his fears as Dr. Worcester can make to ours. But if there be a principle, which above all others shines resplendently in the sacred volume, it is this, that he who breathes the spirit and follows the steps of Jesus, however faint or defective be his views, will certainly enter into the joy of his Lord.

Another method of awakening the feelings of the community against Unitarian sentiments is this. Dr. Worcester charges me again and again with attempting studiously to conceal the differences between Unitarians and Trinitarians, as if our sentiments were too horrible to be brought fully and fairly to the light. He intimates that *we* “dread a development.” And does Dr. Worcester really believe that we stand in awe of *him*, or his “orthodox” brethren? We respect many of our opponents, but we *dread* none. Our love of peace, they may be assured, has another origin than fear or selfish views. It is from deep conviction, and not from the principle which Dr. Worcester insinuates, that I have stated once and again, that the differences between Unitarians and Trinitarians lie more in sounds than in ideas; that a barbarous phraseology is the chief wall of partition between these classes of Christians; and that would Trinitarians tell us what they mean, their system would generally be found little else, than a mystical form of the Unitarian doctrine. These two classes of Christians appear to me to concur in receiving the most interesting and practical truths of the gospel. Both believe in one God of infinite perfection; and we must remember, that it is this perfection of God, and not his unknown substance, which is the proper object of the Christian’s love.

Both believe in the great doctrine, that eternal life is the free gift of God through Jesus Christ. Both learn from the lips and life of Jesus the same great principles of duty, the same exalted views of human perfection, and the same path to immortality. I could easily extend these points of agreement; and what are the questions which divide them? Why these; first, Whether the One God be three distinct subsistences,* or three persons, or three "*somewhats*"† *called persons*, as Dr. Worcester says, for want of a "better word;" and secondly, Whether one of these three subsistences, or improperly called persons, formed a personal union with a human soul, so that the Infinite mind, and a human mind, each possessing its own distinct consciousness, became a *complex person*. Such are the points, or rather phrases of difference between these Christians. And ought phrases like these, of which we find not a trace in the Bible, which cannot be defined by those who employ them, which convey to common minds no more meaning than words of an unknown tongue, and which present to the learned only flitting shadows of thought instead of clear and steady conceptions, to separate those who are united in the great principles which I have stated? Trinitarians indeed are apt to think themselves at an immeasurable distance from Unitarians. The reason, I think, is, that they are surrounded with a mist of obscure phraseology. Were this mist dispersed, I believe that they would be surprised at discovering their proximity to the quarter of the Unitarians, and would learn that they had been wasting their hostility on a band of friends and brothers. Whenever Trinitarians begin to explain themselves, we find that their three persons vanish into three *undefinable somethings*, and that *God suffered*

* Wardlaw.

† This word has been used by Trinitarians in writing and conversation.

for us on the cross only by a figure or metaphysical fiction. Such is Trinitarianism, as it appears to my mind. In all this I may mistake, but I have no motive and certainly no desire to practise "concealment."

THE SYSTEM OF EXCLUSION AND DENUNCIATION CONSIDERED.

The object of Dr. Worcester, in the representation, which I have now considered, seems to be, to prepare the "orthodox" for separation from their Unitarian brethren. His remarks all tend to teach them, that they ought to refuse communion with Unitarians as Christians, to deny them the character and name of Christians, to deny their title to the ordinances of the gospel; in a word to disown them as brethren in Christ. On this point I shall now offer several observations.—But first I beg that it may be distinctly understood, that the zeal of liberal Christians on this point has no other object, than the peace and prosperity of the church of Christ. We are pleading, not our own cause, but the cause of our Master. The denial of our christian character by fallible and imperfect men gives us no anxiety. Our relation to Jesus Christ is not to be dissolved by the breath of man. Our christian rights do not depend on human passions. We have precisely the same power over our brethren, which they have over us, and are equally authorized to sever them from the body of Christ. Still more; if the possession of truth give superiour weight to denunciation, we are persuaded that our opposers will be the severest sufferers, should we think fit to hurl back the sentence of exclusion and condemnation. But we have no disposition to usurp power over our brethren. We believe, that the spirit which is so studiously excited against ourselves, has done incalculable injury to the cause of Christ; and we pray God to deliver us from its power.

Why are the name, character, and rights of Christians to be denied to Unitarians? Do they deny that Jesus is the Christ? do they reject his word as the rule of their faith and practice? do their lives discover indifference to his authority and example? No, these are not their offences. They are deficient in none of the qualifications of disciples, which were required in the primitive age. Their offence is, that they read the Scriptures for themselves, and derive from them different opinions on certain points, from those which others have adopted. Mistake of judgment is their pretended crime, and this crime is laid to their charge by men, who are as liable to mistake as themselves, and who seem to them to have fallen into some of the grossest errors. A condemning sentence from such judges carries with it no terror. Sorrow for its uncharitableness, and strong disapprobation of its arrogance, are the principal feelings which it inspires.

It is truly astonishing, that Christians are not more impressed with the unbecoming spirit, the arrogant style, of those, who deny the christian character to professed and exemplary followers of Jesus Christ, because they differ in opinion on some of the most subtle and difficult subjects of theology. A stranger, at hearing the language of these denouncers, would conclude, without a doubt, that they were clothed with infallibility, and were appointed to sit in judgment on their brethren. But for myself, I know not a shadow of pretence for the language of superiority assumed by Dr. Worcester and his brethren. Are they exempted from the common frailty of our nature? Has God given them superiour intelligence? Were they educated under circumstances more favourable to improvement than those whom they condemn. Have they brought to the scriptures more serious, anxious, and unwearied attention? Or do their lives express a deeper reverence for God and for his Son? No. They are fallible, imper-

fect men, possessing no higher means, and no stronger motives for studying the word of God, than their Unitarian brethren. And yet their language to them is virtually this. "We pronounce you to be in error, and in most dangerous error. We know that *we* are right, and that *you* are wrong in regard to the fundamental doctrines of the Gospel. You are unworthy the christian name, and unfit to sit with *us* at the table of Christ. We offer you the truth, and you reject it at the peril of your souls." Such is the language of humble Christians to men, who in capacity and apparent piety are not inferior to themselves. This language has spread from the leaders through a considerable part of the community. Men in those walks of life which leave them without leisure or opportunities for improvement, are heard to decide on the most intricate points, and to pass sentence on men, whose lives have been devoted to the study of the Scriptures. The female, forgetting the tenderness of her sex, and the limited advantages which her education affords for a critical study of the Scriptures, inveighs with bitterness against the damnable errors of such men as Newton, Locke, Clarke and Price ! The young too forget the modesty which belongs to their age, and hurl condemnation on the head which has grown gray in the service of God and mankind. Need I ask, whether this spirit of denunciation for supposed error becomes the humble and fallible disciples of Jesus Christ?

In vindication of this system of exclusion and denunciation it is often urged, that the "honour of religion," the "purity of the church," and the "cause of truth," forbid those who hold the true gospel to maintain fellowship with those who support corrupt and injurious opinions. Without stopping to notice the modesty of those who claim an exclusive knowledge of the true gospel, I would answer, that the "honour of religion" can never suffer by admitting to christian

fellowship men of irreproachable lives, whilst it has suffered most severely from that narrow and uncharitable spirit, which has excluded such men for imagined errors. I answer again, that the cause of truth can never suffer by admitting to christian fellowship men, who honestly profess to make the scriptures their rule of faith and practice, whilst it has suffered most severely by substituting for this standard conformity to human creeds and formularies. It is truly wonderful, if excommunication for supposed error be the method of purifying the church, that the church has been so long and so woefully corrupted. Whatever may have been the deficiencies of christians in other respects, they have certainly discovered no criminal reluctance in applying this instrument of purification. Could the thunders and lightnings of excommunication have corrected the atmosphere of the church, not one pestilential vapour would have loaded it for ages. The air of paradise would not have been more pure, more refreshing. But what does history tell us? It tells us, that the spirit of exclusion and denunciation has contributed more than all other causes to the corruption of the church, to the diffusion of error; and has rendered the records of the christian community as black, as bloody, as revolting to humanity, as the records of empires founded on conquest and guilt.

But it is said, did not the apostle denounce the erroneous, and pronounce a curse on the "abettors of another gospel." This is the strong hold of the friends of denunciation. But let us never forget, that the apostles were inspired men, capable of marking out with unerring certainty those, who substituted "another gospel" for the true. Show us their successors, and we will cheerfully obey them.

It is also important to recollect the *character* of those men, against whom the apostolick anathema was directed. They were men, who *knew distinctly* what the apostles taught, and yet opposed it; and

who endeavoured to sow division, and to gain followers in the churches which the apostles had planted. These men, resisting the known instructions of the authorized and inspired teachers of the gospel, and discovering a factious, selfish, mercenary spirit, were justly excluded as unworthy the christian name. But what in common with these men, have the Christians whom Dr. Worcester and his friends denounce? Do *these* oppose what they *know* to be the doctrine of Christ and his apostles? Do they not revere Jesus and his inspired messengers? Do they not dissent from Dr. Worcester, simply because they believe that Dr. Worcester dissents from their Lord?—Let us not forget, that the contest at the present day is not between the *apostles themselves*, and men who oppose their *known* instructions; but between uninspired Christians, who equally receive the apostles as authorized teachers of the gospel, and who only differ in judgment as to the interpretation of their writings. How unjust then is it for any class of Christians to confound their opponents with the factious and unprincipled sectarians of the primitive age. Mistake in judgment is the heaviest charge which one denomination has now a right to urge against another; and do we find that the apostles ever denounced *mistake* as “awful and fatal hostility” to the gospel, that they pronounced anathemas on men who wished to obey, but who misapprehended their doctrines. The apostles well remembered, that none ever mistook more widely than themselves. They remembered too the lenity of their Lord towards their errors, and this lenity they cherished and laboured to diffuse.

But Dr. Worcester will ask, if Christians have not a right to bear “solemn testimony” against opinions which are “utterly subversive of the gospel, and most dangerous to men’s eternal interests.” To this I answer, that the opinions of men, who discover

equal intelligence and piety with ourselves, are entitled to respectful consideration. If after inquiry they seem erroneous and injurious, we are authorized and bound, according to our ability, to expose, by fair and serious argument, their nature and tendency. But I maintain, that we have no right as individuals, or in an associated capacity, to bear our "solemn testimony" against these opinions, by menacing with ruin the Christian who listens to them, or by branding them with the most terrifying epithets, for the purpose of preventing candid inquiry into their truth. This is the fashionable mode of "bearing testimony," and it is a weapon which will always be most successful in the hands of the proud, the positive and overbearing, who are most impatient of contradiction, and have least regard to the rights of their brethren.

But whatever may be the right of Christians, as to bearing testimony against *opinions* which they deem injurious, I deny, that they have any right to pass a condemning sentence, on account of these opinions, on the *characters* of men whose general deportment is conformed to the gospel of Christ. Both scripture and reason unite in teaching, that the best and only standard of character is the life; and he who overlooks the testimony of a christian life, and grounds a sentence of condemnation on opinions, about which he as well as his brother may err, violates most flagrantly the duty of just and candid judgment, and opposes the peaceful and charitable spirit of the gospel. Jesus Christ says, "By their *fruits* shall ye know them." "Not every one, that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he *who doeth the will* of my Father which is in heaven." "Ye are my friends, if ye *do whatsoever I command you*." "He that heareth and *doeth these my sayings*," i. e. *the precepts* of the sermon on the mount, "I will liken him to a man who built his house upon a rock."

It would be easy to multiply similar passages. The whole scriptures teach us, that he and he only is a Christian, whose life is governed by the precepts of the gospel, and that by this standard alone, the profession of this religion should be tried. We do not deny, that our brethren have a right to form a judgment as to our christian character. But we insist that we have a right to be judged by the fairest, the most approved, and the most settled rules, by which character can be tried; and when these are overlooked, and the most uncertain standard is applied, we are injured; and an assault on character, which rests on this ground, deserves no better name than defamation and persecution.

I know that this suggestion of *persecution* will be indignantly repelled by those who deal most largely in denunciation. But persecution is a wrong or injury inflicted for opinions, and surely assaults on character fall under this definition. Some persons seem to think, that persecution consists in pursuing error with fire and sword; and that therefore it has ceased to exist, except in distempered imaginations, because no class of Christians among us is armed with these terrible weapons. But, no. The form is changed, but the spirit lives. Persecution has given up its halter and fagot, but it breathes venom from its lips, and secretly blasts what it cannot openly destroy. For example, a liberal minister, however circumspect in his walk, however irreproachable in all his relations, no sooner avows his honest convictions on some of the most difficult subjects, than his name begins to be a by-word. A thousand suspicions are infused into his hearers; and it is insinuated, that he is a minister of satan, in "the guise of an angel of light." At a little distance from his home, calumny assumes a bolder tone. He is pronounced an infidel, and it is gravely asked, whether he believes in a God. At a greater distance, his

morals are assailed. He is a man of the world, "leading souls to hell," to gratify the most selfish passions. But notwithstanding all this, he must not say a word about persecution, for reports like these rack no limbs; they do not even injure a hair of his head; and how then is he persecuted?—Now for myself, I am as willing that my adversary should take my purse or my life, as that he should rob me of my reputation, rob me of the affection of my friends, and of my means of doing good. "He who takes from me my good name," takes the best possession of which human power can deprive me. It is true, that a Christian's reputation is comparatively a light object; and so is his property, so is his life; all are light things to him, whose hope is full of immortality. But, of all worldly blessings, an honest reputation is to many of us the most precious; and he who robs us of it, is the most injurious of mankind, and among the worst of persecutors. Let not the friends of denunciation attempt to escape this charge, by pleading their sense of duty, and their sincere desire to promote the cause of truth. St. Dominic was equally sincere, when he built the inquisition; and I doubt not that many torturers of Christians have fortified their reluctant minds, at the moment of applying the rack and the burning iron, by the sincere conviction, that the cause of truth required the sacrifice of its foes. I beg that these remarks may not be applied indiscriminately to the party called "orthodox," among whom are multitudes, whose humility and charity would revolt from making themselves the standards of christian piety, and from assailing the christian character of their brethren.

Many other considerations may be added to those which have been already urged, against the system of excluding from christian fellowship men of upright lives, on account of their opinions. It necessarily generates perpetual discord in the church. Men

differ in opinions as much as in features. No two minds are perfectly accordant. The shades of belief are infinitely diversified. Amidst this immense variety of sentiment, every man is right in his own eyes. Every man discovers errors in the creed of his brother. Every man is prone to magnify the importance of his own peculiarities, and to discover danger in the peculiarities of others. This is human nature. Every man is partial to his own opinions, because they are his own, and his self-will and pride are wounded by contradiction. Now what must we expect, when beings so erring, so divided in sentiment, and so apt to be unjust to the views of others, assert the right of excluding one another from the christian church on account of imagined error? As the Scriptures confine this right to no individual and to no body of Christians, it belongs alike to all; and what must we expect, when Christians of all capacities and dispositions, the ignorant, prejudiced, and self-conceited, imagine it their duty to prescribe opinions to Christendom, and to open or to shut the door of the church according to the decision which their neighbours may form on some of the most perplexing points of theology? This question unhappily has received answer upon answer in ecclesiastical history. We there see christians denouncing and excommunicating one another for supposed error, until every denomination has been pronounced accursed by some portion of the christian world; so that were the curses of men to prevail, not one human being would enter heaven. To me it appears, that to plead for the right of excluding men of blameless lives, on account of their opinions, is to sound the peal of perpetual and universal war. Arm men with this power, and we shall have "nothing but thunder." Some persons are sufficiently simple to imagine, that if this "horrid Unitarianism" were once hunted down, and put quietly into its grave, the church would be at peace. But, no: our present con-

tests have their origin, not in the "enormities" of Unitarianism, but very much in the principles of human nature, in the love of power, in impatience of contradiction, in men's passion for imposing their own views upon others, in the same causes which render them anxious to make proselytes to all their opinions. Were Unitarianism quietly interred, another and another hideous form of error would start up before the zealous guardians of the "purity of the church." The Arminian, from whom the pursuit has been diverted for a time by his more offending Unitarian brother, would soon be awakened from his dream of security, by the clamour of denunciation; and should the Arminian fall a prey, the Calvinists would then find time to look into the controversies among themselves, and almost every class would discover, with the eagle eye of their brethren at New-York, that those who differ from them hold "another gospel," and ought to be "resisted and denounced." Thus the wars of Christians will be perpetual. Never will there be peace, until Christians agree to differ, and agree to look for the evidences of Christian character in the temper and the life.

Another argument against this practice of denouncing the supposed errors of sincere professors of Christianity, is this. It exalts to supremacy in the church, men, who have the least claim to influence. Humble, meek, and affectionate Christians are least disposed to make creeds for their brethren, and to denounce those who differ from them. On the contrary, the impetuous, proud, and enthusiastick, men who cannot or will not weigh the arguments of opponents, are always most positive, and most unsparing in denunciation. These take the lead in a system of exclusion. They have no false modesty, no false charity, to shackle their zeal in framing fundamentals for their brethren, and in punishing the obstinate in

error. The consequence is, that creeds are formed which exclude from Christ's church some of his truest followers, which outrage reason as well as revelation, and which subsequent ages are obliged to mutilate and explain away, lest the whole religion be rejected by men of reflection. Such has been the history of the church. It is strange that we do not learn wisdom from the past. What man, who feels his own fallibility, who sees the errors into which the positive and "orthodox" of former times have been betrayed, and who considers his own utter inability to decide on the degree of truth, which every mind, of every capacity, must receive in order to salvation, will not tremble at the responsibility of prescribing to his brethren, *in his own words*, the views they must maintain on the most perplexing subjects of religion? Humility will always leave this work to others.

Another important consideration is, that this system of excluding men of apparent sincerity, for their opinions, entirely subverts free inquiry into the scriptures. When once a particular system is surrounded by this bulwark; when once its defenders have brought the majority to believe, that the rejection of it is a mark of depravity and perdition, what but the *name* of liberty is left to Christians? The obstacles to inquiry are as real, and may be as powerful, as in the neighbourhood of the inquisition. The multitude dare not think, and the thinking dare not speak. The right of private judgment may thus, in a protestant country, be reduced to a nullity. It is true, that men are sent to the scriptures; but they are told before they go, that they will be driven from the church on earth and in heaven, unless they find in the scriptures the doctrines which are embodied in the popular creed. They are told, indeed, to inquire for themselves; but they are also told, at what points inquiry must arrive; and the sentence of exclusion hangs over

them, if they happen to stray with some of the best and wisest men into forbidden paths. Now this "protestant liberty" is, in one respect, more irritating than Papal bondage. It mocks as well as enslaves us. It talks to us courteously as friends and brethren, whilst it rivets our chains. It invites and even charges us to look with our own eyes, but with the same breath warns us against seeing any thing which orthodox eyes have not seen before us. Is this a state of things favourable to serious inquiry into the truths of the gospel; yet, how long has the church been groaning under this cruel yoke?

Another objection to this system of excluding professed disciples of Christ, on account of their opinions, is, that it is inconsistent with the great principles of Congregationalism. In churches, where the power is lodged in a few individuals, who are supposed to be the most learned men in the community, the work of marking out and excluding the erroneous may seem less difficult. But among Congregationalists, the tribunal before which the offender is to be brought is *the whole church*, consisting partly of men in humble circumstances, and of unimproved minds; partly of men engaged in active and pressing business; and partly of men of education, whose studies have been directed to law and medicine. Now, is this a tribunal, before which the most intricate points of theology are to be discussed, and serious inquirers are to answer for opinions, which they have perhaps examined more laboriously and faithfully than all their judges? Would a church of humble men, conscious of their limited opportunities, consent to try for these pretended crimes professing Christians, as intelligent, as honest, and as exemplary as themselves? It is evident, that in the business of excluding men for opinions, a church can be little more than the tool of the minister, or a few influential members; and our churches are, in general, too in-

dependent and too upright to take this part in so solemn a transaction. To correct their deficiencies, and to quicken their zeal on this point, we are now threatened with *new tribunals, or consociations*, whose office it will be to try ministers for their errors, to inspect the churches, and to advise and assist them in the extirpation of "heresy." Whilst the laity are slumbering, the ancient and free constitution of our churches is silently undermined, and is crumbling away. Since argument is insufficient to produce uniformity of opinion, recourse must be had to more powerful instruments of conviction ; I mean, to ECCLESIASTICAL COURTS. And are this people indeed prepared to submit to this most degrading form of vassalage ; a vassalage, which reaches and palsies *the mind*, and imposes on it the dreams and fictions of men, for the everlasting truth of God !

These remarks lead me to the last consideration, which I shall urge, against the proposed system of exclusion and separation. This system will shake to the foundation our religious institutions, and destroy many habits and connexions which have had the happiest influence on the religious character of this people. In the first place, if christian communion and all acknowledgments of christian character are to be denied on the ground of difference of opinion, the annual "Convention of Congregational ministers, of Massachusetts," that ancient bond of union, must be dissolved ; and in its dissolution we shall lose the edifying, honourable, and rare example of ministers regularly assembling, not to exercise power and to fetter the conscience, but to reciprocate kind affection, and to unite in sending relief to the families of their deceased brethren. This event may gladden the heart of the sectarian ; it will carry no joy to the widow and orphan.—In the next place, the "Associations of ministers," in our different counties must in many cases be broken up, to make room for new

associations, founded on similarity of opinion. Thus, that intercourse, which now subsists between ministers of different persuasions, and which tends to enlarge the mind, and to give a liberality to the feelings, will be diminished, if not destroyed; and ministers, becoming more contracted and exclusive, will communicate more of this unhappy spirit to their societies.—In the next place, neighbouring churches, which, from their very foundation, have cultivated christian communion, and counselled and comforted each other, will be mutually estranged, and catching the temper of their religious guides, will exchange fellowship for denunciation; and instead of delighting in each other's prosperity, will seek each other's destruction.—Again, in the same church, where Christians of different views have long acknowledged each other as disciples of one Master, and have partaken the same feast of charity, angry divisions will break forth, parties will be marshalled under different leaders, the sentence of excommunication will be hurled by the majority on their guiltless brethren, (if the majority should be “orthodox,”) and thus anger, heart-burnings, and bitter recriminations will spread through many of our towns and churches.—Again; many of our religious societies will be rent asunder, their ministers dismissed, and religious institutions cease. It is well known, that many of our country parishes are able to support but a single minister. At the same time, they are divided in sentiment; and nothing but a spirit of charity and forbearance has produced that union, by which publick worship has been maintained. Once let the proposed war be proclaimed, let the standard of party be raised, and a minister must look for support to that party only to which he is attached. An “orthodox” minister should blush to ask it from men, whom he denounces for honest opinions, and to whom he denies all the ordinances of the gospel. It surely cannot be

expected that liberal Christians will contribute, by their property, to uphold a system of exclusion and intolerance directed against themselves. What then will be the fate of many of our societies? Their ministers, even now, can with difficulty maintain the conflict with other denominations: must they not sink, when deserted by their most efficient friends? Many societies will be left, as sheep without a shepherd, a prey to those whom we call Sectarians, but who will no longer have an exclusive right to the name, if the system of division, which has been proposed, be adopted. Many ministers will be compelled to leave the field of their labours and their prospects of usefulness; and I fear the ministry will lose its hold on the affection and veneration of men, when it shall have engendered so much division and contention.—But this is not all. The system of denying the christian name to those who differ from us in interpreting the scriptures, will carry discord not only into churches, but families. In how many instances are heads of families divided in opinion on the present subjects of controversy. Hitherto they have loved each other as partakers of the same glorious hopes, and have repaired in their domestick joys and sorrows to the same God (as they imagined,) through the same Mediator. But now they are taught, that they have *different Gods* and *different gospels*, and are taught that the friends of truth are not to hold communion with its rejectors. Let this doctrine be received, and one of the tenderest ties by which many wedded hearts are knit together will be dissolved. The family altar must fall. Religion will be known in many a domestick retreat, not as a bond of union, but a subject of debate, a source of discord or depression.

Now I ask, for what boon are all these sacrifices to be made? The great end is, that certain opinions, which have been embraced by many serious and in-

quiring Christians as the truth of God, may be driven from the church, and be dreaded by the people as among the worst of crimes. *Uniformity of opinion*, that airy good, which emperors, popes, councils, synods, bishops, and ministers have been seeking for ages, by edicts, creeds, threatenings, excommunications, inquisitions and flames, this is the great object of the system of exclusion, separation, and denunciation which is now to be introduced. To this we are to sacrifice our established habits and bonds of union, and this is to be pursued by means, which, as many reflecting men believe, threaten our dearest rights and liberties.

It is sincerely hoped, that reflecting laymen will no longer shut their eyes on this subject. It is a melancholy fact, that our long established congregational form of church government is menaced, and tribunals unknown to our churches, and unknown, as we believe, to the scriptures, are to be introduced; and introduced for the very purpose, that the supposed errors and mistakes of ministers and private Christians may be tried and punished as heresies, *i. e.* as crimes. In these tribunals, as in all ecclesiastical bodies, the clergy, who make theology their profession, will of necessity have a preponderating influence, so that the question now before the publick is in fact only a new form of the old controversy, which has agitated all ages, *viz. whether the clergy shall think for the laity, or prescribe to them their religion?* Were this question fairly proposed to the publick, there would be but one answer; but it is wrapped up in a dark phraseology about the purity and order of the church, a phraseology, which, I believe, imposes on multitudes of ministers as well as laymen, and induces acquiescence in measures, the real tendency of which they would abhor. It is, I hope, from no feeling of party, but from a sincere regard to the religion of Christ, that I would rouse the slumbering minds of this community

to the dangers which hang over their religious institutions. No power is so rapidly accumulated, or so dreadfully abused as ecclesiastical power. It assails men with menaces of eternal wo, unless they submit, and gradually awes the most stubborn and strongest minds into subjection. I mean not to ascribe the intention of introducing ecclesiastical tyranny to any class of Christians among us ; but, I believe that many, in the fervour of a zeal which may be essentially virtuous, are about to touch with unhallowed hands the ark of God, to support christianity by measures which its mild and charitable spirit abhors. I believe, that many, overlooking the principles of human nature, and the history of the church, are about to set in motion a spring of which they know not the force, and cannot calculate the effects. I believe, that the seed of spiritual tyranny is sown, and although to a careless spectator it may seem the “smallest of all seeds,” it has yet, within itself, a fatal principle of increase, and may yet darken this region of our country with its deadly branches.

The time is come, when the friends of christian liberty and christian charity are called to awake, and to remember their duties to themselves, to posterity, and to the church of Christ. The time is come, when the rights of conscience and the freedom of our churches must be defended with zeal. The time is come, when menace and denunciation must be met with a spirit, which will show, that we dread not the frowns, and lean not on the favour of man. The time is come, when every expression of superiority on the part of our brethren should be repelled as criminal usurpation. But in doing this, let the friends of liberal and genuine christianity remember the spirit of their religion. Let no passion or bitterness dishonour their sacred cause. In contending for the gospel, let them not lose its virtues or forfeit its promises.—We are indeed called to pass

through one of the severest trials of human virtue, the trial of controversy. We should carry with us a sense of its danger. Religion, when made a subject of debate, seems often to lose its empire over the heart and life. The mild and affectionate spirit of christianity gives place to angry recriminations and cruel surmises. Fair dealing, uprightness, and truth are exchanged for the quibbling and arts of sophistry. The devotional feelings, too, decline in warmth and tenderness. Let us then watch and pray. Let us take heed that the weapons of our warfare be not carnal. Whilst we repel usurpation, let us be just to the general rectitude of many by whom our christian rights are invaded. Whilst we repel the uncharitable censures of men, let us not forget that deep humility and sense of unworthiness, with which we should ever appear before our Maker. In our zeal to maintain the great truth, that OUR FATHER IN HEAVEN is alone the Supreme God, let us not neglect that intercourse with him, without which the purest conceptions will avail little to enthrone him in our hearts. In our zeal to hold fast the "word of Christ" in opposition to human creeds and formularies, let us not forget, that our Lord demands another and a still more unsuspecting confession of him, even the exhibition of his spirit and religion in our lives.

The controversy in which we are engaged is indeed painful ; but it was not chosen, but forced upon us, and we ought to regard it as a part of the discipline to which a wise Providence has seen fit to subject us. Like all our other trials, it is designed to promote our moral perfection. I trust, too, that it is designed to promote the cause of truth. Whilst I would speak diffidently of the future, I still hope, that a brighter day is rising on the christian church, than it has yet enjoyed. The gospel is to shine forth in its native glory. The violent excitement, by which some of the corruptions of this divine system are now

supported, cannot be permanent ; and the uncharitableness with which they are enforced, will re-act, like the persecutions of the church of Rome, in favour of truth. Already we have the comfort of seeing many disposed to inquire, and to inquire without that terrour, which has bound as with a spell so many minds. We doubt not, that this inquiry will result in a deep conviction that christianity is yet disfigured by errors which have been transmitted from ages of darkness. Of this, at least, we are sure, that inquiry, by discovering to men the difficulties and obscurities which attend the present topics of controversy, will terminate in what is infinitely more desirable than doctrinal concord, in the diffusion of a mild, candid, and charitable temper. I pray God, that this most happy consummation may be in no degree obstructed by any unchristian feelings, which, notwithstanding my sincere efforts, have escaped me in the present controversy.

NOTE.

It would be easy to point out many exceptionable passages in Dr. Worcester's letter ; but I wish to "abstain even from the appearance" of that minute and carping criticism, so common in controversy, which, overlooking the general import of a book, and the great points of controversy, seizes on unguarded expressions, exposes petty inaccuracies, extracts inferences of which the author never dreamed, and aims to humble an opponent instead of meeting the great question in dispute. There are, however, a few particulars in Dr. Worcester's letter, which ought not to be passed over in that silence, which in the present and in my former remarks I have observed towards many objectionable expressions and passages.

A common reader would imagine from Dr. Worcester's language, that from the age of Christ to the present time, there has been a succession of Christians called "orthodox," who have agreed in opinion on the disputed doctrines of the gospel. But this is a fiction. The opinions of some of the "most orthodox" in New-England, on the Trinity, would have exposed them, I fear, to excommunication by the "orthodox" in some of the early ages of christianity. If I were to define the word "orthodox," I should say that it means the predominant party in the church, and especially those who are so destitute of humility as to arrogate to themselves an exclusive understanding of the gospel.

Dr. Worcester in his first letter had this remarkable, and I think, very unhappy passage. "The God whom *you* worship, is different from *ours*." To remove this impression, I declared very fully, the God whom I worship. Dr. Worcester has taken no notice of this statement, but observes, "We worship the *Father, Son and Holy Ghost*. Do you worship this same God." To this question I will endeavour to give a satisfactory answer. If by "*the Father, Son and Holy Ghost*," Dr. Worcester means the *God of Abraham, of Isaac, of Jacob, who glorified his son Jesus*, whom Peter preached Acts iii ; if he means *the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ* to whom Paul bent the knee ; if he means

that God whom Jesus worshipped in the solemn hour of death, saying, "*Father into thy hands, I commit my spirit ;*" if he means that God of whom Jesus spoke in these memorable words, "*the hour cometh and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth ;* if he means that God of whom Paul said ; "*To us (i. e. to Christians) there is one God, even the Father ;* it by "*the Father, Son and Holy Ghost,*" Dr. Worcester means *this God*, who is proposed to us in these passages, *the God of Jesus Christ, of Abraham, of Paul and of Christians*, then I worship "*the Father, Son and Holy Ghost.*" I sincerely hope that this is Dr. Worcester's meaning, for it would give me great pain to believe that he and his friends worship any other than the "*God of Jesus Christ*" and the *God of Christians*.—Why does he use phraseology, which renders this point in the least degree doubtful? Why does he not speak of the true God in the simple and affecting language of the scriptures? Jesus in his sermon on the Mount, has given us very particular instructions in relation to the object of our worship, and has closed this discourse with a solemn declaration, that if we obey the precepts which it contains, we shall be "*like the man who built his house on a rock.*"—Now in this longest and most particular discourse of Jesus, whom does he tell us to worship. Does he say, when ye pray, pray to "*the Father, Son and Holy Ghost.*" No—His language, so simple, so touching, so encouraging, should be engraven on all our hearts. "*Thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door pray to thy Father who is in secret.*" Again. "*When ye pray, say, Our Father, who art in Heaven ;*" And again. "*If ye being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your Father who is in heaven give good things to them that ask him.*" To these most interesting precepts of Jesus, I and my brethren yield entire and cheerful obedience. With these precepts the whole scriptures concur. We find not *one* passage in the scriptures, commanding us to worship "*the Father, Son and Holy Ghost ;*" not *one* precedent, which authorizes such worship, and while we feel ourselves bound to exercise christian candour towards those who adopt this form of worship, we are not without solemn apprehension, that, in this respect, they are guilty of irreverence towards the word of God, and of preferring to it the commandments and inventions of men. Let them weigh seriously these remarks.

In my former remarks, I repelled the assertion of Dr. Worcester, that *our Saviour is infinitely inferiour to his*, by declaring that "We believe that God saves us by his son Jesus Christ in whom he dwells, and through whom he bestows pardon and eternal life." Dr. Worcester says, that this is to declare that *Jesus Christ* is not *our Saviour*. I lament that his letter is dishonoured by such a remark. Does he not know that the apostles again and again speak of God as our *Saviour*, and as *saving us by Jesus Christ*? Do they therefore deny Jesus to be our Saviour? In 2 Tim. i. 1, we find these words of Paul, "Paul an apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the commandment of *God our Saviour*, and of Jesus Christ our hope." Here *God*, and not Jesus Christ, is called the Saviour. Did Paul intend to deny this name of Jesus Christ? Is not this name applied to Jesus because he is the *minister of God* in our salvation, and do we then refuse it to him, when we declare that it primarily belongs to God, his Father. In 1 Tim. ii. 3, we meet these words, "This is acceptable in the sight of *God our Saviour*, who *will have* all men to be *saved*; for there is *one God*, and *one Mediator* between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." Here *God* is eminently *our Saviour*, and Jesus saves us as he is his minister. In Titus 3, 4, &c. we see this title applied both to God and Jesus Christ in a manner which shows that it belongs to God in the first and highest sense. "After that the kindness of *God our Saviour* appeared, *HE saved* us by the renewing of the Holy Ghost, which he shed on us abundantly *through Jesus Christ our Saviour*.* The apostle, it seems, thought that he might call Jesus Christ *our Saviour*, although he considered *God* as originally and eminently *our Saviour*, and as *saving us through or by Jesus Christ*. I will add one more passage from Jude. "Now unto him who is able to keep you from falling, to the *only God, OUR SAVIOUR*, be glory *through Jesus Christ our Lord*." See Griesbach. Had Dr. Worcester weighed these passages, he would not have made the rash and very improper charge, which I am considering.—Is not the reader inclined to think, that the apostles wrote very much like Unitarians?

It was my intention in this note to show the weakness of the scripture proof of the Trinity which Dr. Worcester has

* I omit some clauses that the connexion may be better seen.

adduced in his letter. But this pamphlet is already extended beyond my wishes ; and besides, I wish to separate the discussion of the Trinity from the present controversy. I would therefore only observe in relation to the texts which have been collected by Dr. Worcester, that nothing is easier than to produce a string of texts in support of almost every doctrine. Calvinism and Arminianism, Universal Salvation and the doctrine of eternal punishment, transubstantiation and other tenets of popery, may each and all be supported by detached passages as conclusive as those which Dr. Worcester has produced for the Trinity. This mode of defence is peculiarly suited to the Trinitarian cause, which rests on a comparatively small number of disconnected texts. Unitarianism, besides being directly affirmed in particular passages, runs through the whole scriptures, appears on the whole current of sentiment and language in the old and the new Testament, its proofs are not therefore to be despatched in so narrow a compass. It is my earnest desire that the publick attention may be turned from individuals to this point. Why cannot this controversy be conducted with calmness, without impeachment of character or motives, and without appeals to popular feeling ? We have all an equal interest in discovering truth ; and no zeal, and no sophistry, can long support the cause of error. Let us then encourage fair and dispassionate discussion, and be careful to throw no obstruction in the way of free and honest inquiry.

I have now a few words to offer on the "*separation*" made by some of the Unitarians in England, to which Dr. Worcester seems disposed to attach great importance. I inferred (perhaps inconsiderately) from the statement of Dr. Worcester in his first letter, that these Unitarians had so far introduced their peculiarities into their publick worship, that other Christians were virtually excluded. Of this separation I expressed no approbation, but simply observed that it by no means amounted to the separation which is recommended in this country, which would deny the christian character to a large body of professing Christians. Dr. Worcester, however, by a kind of reasoning, which is too common with him, infers that this kind of separation would be quite agreeable to me, and spends a page in observations founded chiefly on my silence. Since writing my remarks, I have been happy to learn that the impressions which I received from Dr. Worcester respecting these English Unitarians were incorrect. I am inform-

ed, that their worship is singularly free from peculiarities, and that all Christians may join in it without hesitation or pain. I learn, that Mr. Lindsey introduced into his chapel the Liturgy of the church of England, omitting only the few parts in which the doctrine of the Trinity is recognized, and directing all the prayers to the Father through the Son. This is the worship which is most common among all denominations in this country, and by which no Christian can be offended. Most sincerely do I wish, that our publick services may be marked by this liberal character. Very different classes of Christians, I am persuaded, may unite in the same worship, and be built up at once in godliness and charity. I have listened with great satisfaction to the prayers of Trinitarians, and I have heard from very ardent Trinitarians expressions of great interest in prayers which have been offered by Unitarians. True piety, when unfettered by system, approaches the Father through the Son, and supplicates earnestly for the aids of the Holy Spirit.

Dr. Worcester speaks in his letter of the "*awful temerity*" of adjudging to eternal life, men, however fair their character in the eyes of the world, however renowned for what the world calls wisdom, however distinguished among the friends of *science* or of *sacred literature*, who nevertheless deny the blood of atonement, degrade the Lord, who bought them, to the condition of a mere creature, go about to establish their own righteousness," &c. This passage is designed to teach us that we cannot without *awful temerity* admire the christian virtues and labours of such men as Newton, Locke, Lardner and Price, or cherish the delightful hope that they have gone to receive the rewards of faithful servants of Jesus Christ. I confess that I am shocked when I hear the humble Lardner, (at whom these remarks seem principally aimed) charged with degrading that Saviour, to whose cause his life was devoted, with criminal insensibility to his honour and with a proud dependence on "his own righteousness." There must be something wrong, dreadfully wrong, in a religious system, which calls us to breathe mildew on the fairest and most interesting characters which have adorned the church, and to repress the gratitude and admiration which spontaneously spring up in a pure mind towards the most illustrious benefactors of mankind. If it be "*awful temerity*" to think Lardner a good man, where is the human being whose

piety we ought not to distrust. What can preserve us from distrusting the reality of all human virtue? To this mournful result, the present system of denunciation directly tends. It tends to diffuse the most fatal kind of skepticism, a skepticism in regard to the *reality* of all moral and religious excellence. If the marks of christian virtue which have been exhibited by Unitarians be false and delusive, then none are worthy of confidence, and the slanders which the Atheist has cast on human piety cannot be refuted.— If “orthodoxy” encourage and demand this fatal censoriousness, it cannot be of God; it cannot ultimately prevail.

THIRD LETTER

TO THE

REV. WILLIAM E. CHANNING,

ON THE SUBJECT OF

UNITARIANISM.

.....
BY SAMUEL WORCESTER, D.D.

PASTOR OF THE TABERNACLE CHURCH, SALEM.

.....

BOSTON:

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1815.

LETTER.

REV. AND DEAR SIR,

I FIND that you have seen fit to make to the publick another set of remarks about me, and about other persons and things in connexion with me. I did hope, if you should condescend to write again, it would not be in the style of a murmurer and complainer, or of a popular suiter and declaimer. If the “self-respect” and “virtuous indignation,” of which you have so emphatically spoken, required you to turn your back upon your opponent, and to refuse to him the offices, not only of brotherly kindness, but of common civility; yet it might have been well, had they not withheld you also from attending to the points which essentially belong to the debate, which have been distinctly stated and urged, and which certainly merit very serious and candid consideration and discussion. Those, however, are virtues it should seem of no ordinary loftiness and inflexibility, and of no ordinary claims and prerogatives.

On the question of writing again, several considerations have presented themselves to my mind. My Second Letter seems to need no vindication or support; as your Remarks have not I suppose, to any one, even the *appearance* of an answer. My labours and duties are many, and my health is frail. A considerable portion of the publick are probably desirous that the controversy should cease: as a large class have not patience to attend long to any subject which requires serious thought; not a few have an imposing prejudice against all religious debate, and a morbid dread of this discussion in particular; as if religious truth, and such especially as relates directly to the redemption of mankind, and the person and kingdom of the Redeemer, ought not to be developed or defended: and not a little influence is exerted to prevent people from reading—more than one side.—Still

however there are many who do read and will read both sides. The points in discussion are among the most important, that could be offered to the attention of the christian community. Though some ill effects may ensue, as, in a world like this, is always to be expected, when any thing is attempted for the cause of truth; yet the persuasion, I believe, is continually extending and gaining strength, that the good effects will greatly preponderate. And though I have been accused of being a volunteer in this service, as I would certainly wish to be, in a cause so deeply interesting to the honour and kingdom of the Lord Jesus; yet as I have girded on the harness, whether prudently or imprudently, the time does not seem to have arrived for me to put it off.—What I have now to offer will be disposed under several distinct heads.

I. In the outset of your Remarks, you re-urge the charge of “bad spirit and intention.” To this I am compelled briefly to reply.—My conscience bears me witness, that my design has been not to excite popular or party passions and animosities, already in a flame when I first took my pen, but to assuage them; not to promote a violent disruption, or an irregular denunciation in the christian community, but to give such a direction to the controversy, as would lead to sober and conscientious inquiry, and to a right understanding of truth and of duty. It has long been well known, that I have not been the advocate of rash measures, of hasty separations, or of a rigorously restricted system of fellowship. You have yourself been pleased to say, that you had “regarded me as a man of candour, moderation, and liberal feelings.” Though you have seen fit to alter your opinion, and to represent me as a man destitute of candour, and possessed of a bitter, malignant, and persecuting spirit; yet I suppose it will be obvious to others, if not to yourself, that this latter opinion has been formed under circumstances not the most favourable to an impartial and correct judgment; and I am sustained in the confidence, that candid men will pronounce, that for your sudden change of opinion, and your consequent criminations, so hastily expressed, and so pertinaciously reiterated, you had no sufficient reason.

To a candour, indeed, which confounds the distinction between truth and error,—to a moderation which regards both the one and the other, as of little consequence,—to a liberality which places them on equal terms, in regard to christian character and christian communion, I make no pretensions. I do hold, that belief in the truth is essential to christianity; and that “the church of the living God, which is the pillar and ground of the truth,” and the ministers of Jesus Christ, who are “set for the defence of the gospel,” have not only a right to inquire, but are under obligations of infinite responsibility to inquire, concerning the faith as well as the practice of individuals and communities, claiming christian fellowship:—to inquire, however, with candour, and meekness, and charity, making a difference between ignorance and disbelief, and between circumstantial errors, and fundamental. This is my heinous offence,—my unpardonable crime. It is on account of this persuasion, that you have “considered my letter unworthy of me as a christian and a christian minister,” and “thought that I have discovered a strange insensibility towards my brethren,” and written with a bad spirit and intention. I say, this is the reason of your abundant criminations of me: for you have pointed to no other, but to this you have distinctly and repeatedly pointed.

What you think of me, or what I think of you, is in itself of little importance to the publick, and can have nothing to do with the merits of the cause in debate. It may be, however, of considerable consequence, to remark the grounds on which you are so ready to pronounce a man to be destitute of candour, and charity, and all good motives and feelings, and to impute to him a bitter, malignant, and persecuting spirit; as it may serve to explain the nature of that charity on which you lay so great a stress, and to which you make such lofty pretensions. Let it here then be distinctly noted, that, according to your representations, if a man demur as to christian fellowship, on account of any error in sentiment, he is destitute of charity, and a persecutor; if he regard no error as any bar to fellowship, he is a charitable man, and a liberal christian. This topic I shall have occasion to consider further in another place.

II. You give it to be understood, that the reason of your appearing again before the publick, was my call upon you to retract a misstatement. You had stated that "the obvious import of the concluding part of" my first "Letter might be thus expressed: 'Every man who cannot admit as a doctrine of scripture, the great doctrine of three persons in one God, which I and other orthodox christians embrace, believes an opposite gospel, rejects the true gospel, despises the authority of Jesus Christ, is of course a man wholly wanting in true piety and without christian virtue; and may in perfect consistency with christian love be rejected as unworthy the name of a christian.' " I did pronounce this "a flagrant misstatement," and solemnly call upon you to retract it. In reply you say. "I intend to shew, that in giving this interpretation, I followed the natural meaning of Dr. Worcester's words, that I put no violence on his language, and that no other sense would have offered itself to an unprejudiced mind." You then proceed to "state the passages" of my letter "which led to the representation which you had formed."

I did propose to requote all those passages in their order, for the sake of shewing in a strong light the strange state of that mind which could assert, and in the face of the clear exposition of my sentiments and views, given in my Second Letter, reassert, that "the natural meaning" of them is given in your contested statement. But I feel a strong repugnance to filling the pages of my present letter with quotations from my former ones; and a repugnance, not less strong, to bestowing so much attention upon a point so personal. One principal passage, therefore, may suffice. "Is it," I ask in my first Letter, p. 32, "Is it then a violation of the great law of love for the friends of truth to decline communion with its rejecters?—We have nothing to do here with slight diversities of opinion; with differences about modes or forms, or inconsiderable points of faith or practice. Our concern is with differences of a radical and fundamental nature; such as exist between orthodox christians and Unitarians of all degrees, even down to the creed of Mr. Belsham: for to this point you have yourself fairly reduced the present question. —Yes, Sir, the simple point here at issue is, Whether it be a violation of

the law of love for believers in the true gospel of Jesus Christ to separate from believers in another and an opposite gospel? If yours is the true gospel, then ours is another; if ours is the true gospel, then yours is another. In either case, the great question respecting fellowship remains the same." This is the passage on which you seem mainly to rely; and it is undoubtedly the strongest passage of the whole, and includes in it the principal ideas, of any aspect to your purpose, contained in the rest.—But, Sir, do I here say, that "*Every man who cannot admit as a doctrine of scripture, the great doctrine of three persons in one God, which I and other orthodox christians embrace, believes an opposite gospel, rejects the true gospel, despises the authority of Jesus Christ, and is, of course, a man wholly wanting in true piety and without christian virtue!*" Is this "the natural meaning of the words?" and does no other sense offer itself to an unprejudiced mind?" I put the question, Sir, to your conscience.

Please to observe. In the first place, in this passage, I state the question at issue: "Is it a violation of the great law of love for the friends of truth to decline communion with its rejecters?"—I then, that the question may be disembarrassed, state by way of explication, that "We have nothing to do here with slight diversities of opinion; with differences about modes or forms, or inconsiderable points of faith or practice:" such as those might be thought to be, which exist between orthodox christians and some whom you would call the higher Unitarians. "Our concern," I further observe, "is with differences of a radical and fundamental nature; such as exist between orthodox christians and Unitarians of all degrees, even down to the creed of Mr. Belsham: for to this point you have yourself fairly reduced the present question." You certainly had reduced it to this point. You had contended, that Unitarians, not of the higher degrees only, but even of the lowest degrees, ought to be held in christian fellowship. I therefore, fixed upon Mr. Belsham's creed, as something tangible and definite, by means of which the merits of the pending question might be tried; and, reduced to this point, the question, which otherwise might have been attended with embarrassment and perplexity, became to my mind a very

plain one. Accordingly I had a little before said, "The question then is a short one. Is not Mr. Belsham's gospel, as set forth in his creed, another gospel than that which Paul preached? If you are not willing to admit this; yet surely you cannot hesitate a moment to admit, that it is another than that which is held by orthodox christians,—which is preached by orthodox ministers:—essentially different in every particular from the foundation to the topstone. One or the other of these schemes then must be what St. Paul denominates another gospel, and against which and its abettors he solemnly pronounces his apostolick anathema." To this statement I distinctly refer in the passage under consideration. Having thus simplified the question respecting fellowship, by restricting it to Mr. Belsham's scheme, I then proceed to restate it in these words: "Yes, Sir, the simple point here at issue is, whether it be a violation of the law of love for believers in the true gospel of Jesus Christ to separate from believers in another and an opposite gospel. If yours is the true gospel, then ours is another; if ours is the true gospel, then yours is another. In either case the great question respecting fellowship remains the same."—Was it possible for the question to have been more clearly or definitely stated? Was it possible for it to have been more plainly expressed, that the issue to be tried was precisely between *the believers in Mr. Belsham's gospel*, and the believers in that called orthodox? Mr. Belsham's is here called "your gospel, for the very obvious reason, that it is the one which, in the statement of the question, is opposed on *your* part to the one on *our* part."

Now, Sir, I ask again, do I in this passage say, that "*Every man* who cannot admit as a doctrine of scripture, the great doctrine of three persons in one, which I and other orthodox christians embrace, believes in an opposite gospel, rejects the true gospel, despises the authority of Jesus Christ, and is, of course, a man wholly wanting in true piety and without christian virtue." No, Sir: it is not here, or any where else by me, said, that "*every man*" who does not embrace the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity either "believes in," or "abets, an opposite gospel," or "rejects the true gospel, or despises the authority of Jesus Christ," or "is

wholly wanting in christian piety," or is "without christian virtue." Neither of these things is either affirmed or implied in any passage of mine; but the terms used by me, and the entire connexion, are particularly and pointedly guarded against such a construction. Had not *you* said it, I should certainly have thought that the person who could say, that the interpretation which you have given is "the natural meaning of my words," "that in giving such an interpretation no violence is put upon my language," and "that no other sense offers itself to an unprejudiced mind," really had not "ability to decide on the obvious import of a letter written in our native tongue," and ought to be sent to school, to learn the very rudiments of grammar and logick. This remark I apply to all the passages which you have cited. Taken severally or collectively, in a detached state or in their respective connexions, they neither naturally express, nor by all the torture to which you have put, or can put them, can they be made to yield the sense which you have so resolutely attempted to fasten upon them.

Had it, however, been otherwise; had my expressions been such as easily to admit, or even naturally to convey the sense of your statement; yet, if they would bear another construction, and I had explicitly said that such was not my meaning, it might have been compatible with the laws of common courtesy for my disavowal to have been candidly accepted. It has been thought allowable in debate, for a person, when misunderstood, to explain; and right that his explanation should be admitted. But this privilege has not been allowed to me. I was misunderstood,—certainly misrepresented: and though I thought my language sufficiently plain, yet I went, in my Second Letter, into a full and candid exposition of my sentiments and views; and not only said, but shewed, that my meaning was not, and could not have been, such as you had stated. Yet after all this, you take it upon you to say, that you "cannot avoid the belief that my recollections on this point are imperfect;" you resolutely insist on your former interpretation, which I have explicitly disavowed, and refuse to admit my frank exposition of my own meaning. This, Sir, is carrying the claims of your "self respect very far: to an extent,

I believe, beyond what any courteous, and candid, and modest, and honourable man, to say nothing of a christian minister, ever before attempted.

I must here quote from your Remarks an extraordinary passage. "Dr. Worcester, however," you say, p. 12, "assures me that I have misrepresented him; and I have no disposition to question the sincerity with which he now declares that he did not intend to communicate the sentiments which I ascribed to him. I cannot indeed avoid the belief, that his recollections on this point are imperfect, and that in the hurry of his thoughts and feelings, he was not so watchful over his motives as he now imagines." In the same style you say, p. 4, "Dr. Worcester, however, disclaims the feelings and intentions which I have ascribed to him.—That he is sincere in reporting what *now* appears to him to have been the state of his mind during the composition of his first letter, I am far from denying. But on a subject like this, memory is sometimes treacherous; and I confess I cannot shake off the conviction, that some improper feelings, perhaps unsuspected by Dr. Worcester, occasionally guided his pen." Here, Sir, is an expedient to save one's "self respect" from the pain of a concession, and to fix upon an opponent an injurious charge, the whole credit of which, I do believe, belongs to you, and ought forever to remain in your uncontested possession: an expedient of which, I presume, the annals of controversy might be searched throughout in vain, for an example, a prototype, or a parallel. Will any reader in the world suppose that, in both or either of those instances, I really misremembered?—or that you seriously meant to be understood that I did misremember? Why then this spurious irony,—this wayward circumlocution? Why not charge me directly with falsehood, as you had before done the Reviewers?

You have had, Sir, a fair opportunity for a display of candour. You had misstated the import of an important part of my Letter. This was a different affair from that which was before between us, relating to the Reviewers. That was a question concerning the meaning of a third party, and, therefore, concerning which I as well as you might misjudge; this was a question respecting my own meaning, and respecting

which I could not mistake. I supposed you had wronged the Reviewers; I *knew* you had wronged me. Without, however, imputing to you any ill intention or motive, I remonstrated, explained, and called upon you to retract. It was only, in a christian spirit and manner, to acknowledge that you had misapprehended my meaning,—and the credit for ingenuous feeling, especially the consciousness of having done an act of magnanimous equity to an opponent, would have abundantly compensated for any self denial which there might have been in the case. But you have chosen a different course, and must look for a different reward. I can, however, assure you, Sir, that it would have afforded me much greater pleasure to have had occasion to acknowledge your generous candour, than I have found in making the kind of stricture which you have compelled me to make.

III. Page 13, you make this statement. “Dr. Clark believed, that the Father alone is the Supreme God, and that Jesus Christ is not the Supreme God, but derived his being, and all his power and honours from the Father, even by an act of the Father’s power and will. He maintains, that as the scriptures have not taught us the manner in which the Son derived his existence from his Father, it is presumptuous to affirm, that the Son was created, or, that there was a time when he did not exist. On these subjects the word of God has not given us light, and therefore we ought to be silent. The author of Bible News in like manner affirms, that the Father only is the Supreme God, that Jesus is a distinct being from God, and that he derives every thing from his Father. He has some views relating to the “proper Sonship,” of God, which neither liberal nor orthodox christians generally embrace. But the prevalent sentiments of liberal christians seem to me to accord substantially with the systems I have above described. Like Dr. Clark, the majority of this class feel that the scriptures have not taught the mode of Christ’s derivation. They therefore do not call Christ a creature, but leave the subject in the obscurity in which they find it, carrying with them, however, an impression, that the scriptures ascribe to Jesus the character of Son of God in a peculiarly high sense, and in a sense in which it is ascribed to no other being.”

Upon this statement I submit the following remarks.

1. The appellation "liberal christians," is ambiguous and indeterminate. In your first pamphlet you tell us, that "liberal christians are scattered through all classes of christians;" and that although "in this part of the country they are generally," yet "by no means universally Unitarians." And you somewhere, I think, estimate that about one third part of the ministers and christian professors in this commonwealth are of the liberal class. I have myself computed, that about this proportion are non-calvinistick; and it should seem that all these are included by you in the denomination of "liberal christians." Of these, however, I have supposed there are many, who are not Unitarians. They may have some difficulties and doubts respecting the terms in which the doctrine of the Trinity is often stated, and some diversities in the manner of conceiving and speaking of the doctrine, and yet believe in the true divinity of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. If so, they ought not to be classed with Unitarians. "Those," as justly observed by Bishop Huntingford, "who hold the doctrine of a Trinity, however individually they may give different explications of it, are nevertheless Trinitarians; as those, who protest against a particular church, although unhappily among themselves they have separated from each other, by multifarious divisions, and discriminate each other by subtle distinctions, implying even dimidiation, are nevertheless all protestants."

Dr. Samuel Clark was not a Unitarian, and ought not to be so called or classed. He held to an "EVER-BLESSED TRINITY."—to a Trinity of "DIVINE PERSONS,"—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, who existed together "FROM THE BEGINNING." This is the *substance* of his scheme; and in this he agreed with orthodox Trinitarians, though in other respects he differed from them. And if, as it "seems" to you "the prevalent sentiments among liberal christians in this quarter of our country accord *substantially* with Dr. Clark's," then these "prevalent sentiments" are not Unitarian. How large a proportion of those whom you would assign to the liberal class, are Trinitarians, or believers in the essential divinity of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, I do not know;

nor do I know in what manner they would severally explain themselves upon this subject, or where they would choose to be considered as standing. I have, however, entertained the hope, that by the process of developement it would be found, that not a few of them are more orthodox than Dr. Clark; and that the Unitarian brotherhood is much less numerous, than you seem desirous of having it understood to be.

2. It appears from your statement, that the “prevalent sentiments of liberal christians” are exceedingly unsettled, indistinct, and indeterminate. “The majority of this class, you say, *feel* that the scriptures have not taught the mode of Christ’s derivation. They therefore do not call Christ a creature, but leave the subject in the obscurity in which they find it, carrying with them, however, an impression, that the scriptures ascribe to Jesus the character of Son of God in a peculiarly high sense, and in a sense in which it is ascribed to no other being.” With these “liberal christians,” then, it is a matter of utter uncertainty, of endless doubt, and, it would seem, of cold and lofty indifference, who the Saviour of the world is!—whether he is a created, or an uncreated being; whether he existed from eternity, or begun to exist in time; whether he is a God, who, though inferiour to the “supreme God,” has yet a rightful claim to religious worship, or only their fellow servant, to whom no divine honours belong! From other passages, on which I shall have occasion in another place to remark, it appears that the same uncertainty, and doubt, and indifference exist with these same “liberal christians,” in regard to what Jesus Christ has done for them:—whether he died to expiate their sins with blood of inestimable merit, or whether “in consequence” merely “of what he has done and suffered, the punishment of sin is averted from the penitent;” as it may have been, in consequence of the sufferings and labours, the instructions and intercessions of Paul and other good men, by whose means sinners have been brought to repentance!—Of course, there must be similar uncertainty, doubt, and indifference, as to the obligations which they owe to him; as to the love and trust, the thanks and honours to which he is entitled.—Do they then honour the Son, even as they honour, or should honour the

Father? They do not know who or what the Son is. Are they blessed in putting their trust in him? They do not know to what extent, or for what purposes he is to be trusted. Do they delight to join in the heavenly anthem, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing? They do not know that he is worthy thus to be adored and praised!—Ah! where are we? Into what a region of frost, of darkness, of the shadow of death are we advancing!—Is this, Sir, the light which is so ardently hailed, and so loudly proclaimed by the "rational christians," of this favoured age? Is it here that we are to find the grand consummation of divine knowledge, that "purer system of christianity," to which you and your "liberal" brethren would guide mankind? Is it in this chilling, dismal clime, that professed christians of every name are to meet together in one blessed fellowship? No wonder then that Jews and Infidels, Mohammedans and Pagans are invited to participate in the blessedness.* And no wonder, that they who adore the Lord Jesus, as "*the true God and eternal life*," and delight in the ascription, "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins, in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father,—to him be glory and dominion forever and ever," should decline the invitation.

"This," says our great Intercessor, "This is the life eternal, to know thee the only true God, and JESUS THE CHRIST whom thou hast sent."† But in the knowledge of Jesus the

* With intimations to this effect, the writings of Unitarians abound.

† "What is said here of the *only true God*, seems said in opposition to the gods whom the heathens worshipped; not in opposition to Jesus Christ himself, who is called the *true God* by John in 1 Epist. v, 20." Bishop Pearce.

"That our blessed Lord here speaks of the *only true God*, in distinction from idols, and not to the exclusion of himself, appears from his speaking of himself as the object of the same fiducial knowledge, with the Father, and by his distinguishing himself from the Father, not by any essential title, but merely by his official character, viz. *Jesus Christ*, whom thou hast sent." And the same apostle who recorded this prayer, expressly says of Christ; *This is the true God, and eternal life*, in opposition to *idols*." Dr. Guise.

"Those who deny the Divine nature of Christ, think they have a mighty argument from this text, where Christ (as they say speaking to his Father) calleth him the only true God. But divines answer, that the term *only*, or alone, is not

Christ, must not liberal christians, if your account of them is correct be lamentably wanting?

“The majority of this class,” you say, “feel that the scriptures have not taught the *mode* of Christ’s DERIVATION. And well they may *feel* this: since the scriptures declare, that “his goings forth have been of old, even from EVERLASTING;”—that “in the beginning he was with God, and WAS God;”—that he is “the same yesterday, and to day, and forever,”—“Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the Ending, the First and the Last.”—Your oracle indeed, Dr. Clark, has a long section, entitled, “The passages in which he [Christ] is declared to be subordinate to the Father; *deriving his being* (in an incomprehensible manner) *from Him, receiving from him his divine power, authority and other attributes,*” &c. And under this head, in his own imposing manner, he has arranged about two hundred and forty texts; in not one of which, I feel perfectly safe in saying, is it “declared that Christ derived his being and divine attributes from the Father.” It is not then strange, that “the scriptures have not taught the *mode* of his derivation.” And since you *feel* this, it might be well if you would acknowledge what the scriptures do teach,—that as God he existed with the Father from eternity.

Christ and the great work of redemption by him, is the grand subject of the scriptures, from the beginning to the end. Is it then credible, that, after all, the scriptures have not informed us, who or what Christ is,—whether God or a mere creature,—nor what he has done for us, nor how we are to be saved by him, nor what regards and honours are due from us to him? Is it credible, that the inspired writings have left these primary subjects in such “obscurity,” that

to be applied to *thee*, but to the term *God*; and the sense this: to know *thee* to be that *God* which is the only true *God*; and this appeareth from 1 John v, 20, where *Christ* is said to be the true *God*, which could not be if the Father were the only true God, considered as another [God] from the Son. The term *only* or *alone* is not exclusive of the other two persons in the Trinity, but only of idols, the gods of the heathen which are no gods.—Our Saviour saith it is *life eternal* to know him who is the only true *God*;—he adds, and *Jesus Christ* whom thou hast sent: by which he lets us know, that the Father cannot be savingly known, but in and by the Son.” Poole’s Continuators.

one man may acknowledge him as God, one and co-equal with the Father, another, only as a mere man, "fallible and peccable like other men," and a third as a demigod, or some unknown intermediate being, between the Creator and creatures,—that some may believe his death to have been an expiatory sacrifice for the sins of the world, and others that he died only as a witness to the truth,—that some may trust for justification and salvation only in his vicarious merits, and others in their own virtues,—and yet all of them have an equal claim to the name and privileges of christian believers? Is it credible, that in a divine revelation, a principal object of which is to guard mankind against *idolatry*, and to teach them the true worship, the representations are such as to make the great body of christians in every age *idolaters*,—as the fact certainly is, if Christ is not truly God! Surely the man who can believe all this, ought to charge no other man in the world with strange or enormous credulity.

3. "The majority of liberal christians," you say, "carry with them an impression, that the scriptures ascribe to Jesus the character of Son of God in a peculiarly high sense, and in a sense in which it is ascribed to no other being." Great stress is laid by the deniers of the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity, on this appellation, Son of God: as if it must necessarily denote a separate being, infinitely below the Father, and as if the *sonship* of Christ were denied by Trinitarians. Neither the one nor the other of these assumptions is admitted. Trinitarians not merely "carry with them an impression," but have a firm belief, that "the scriptures ascribe to Jesus the character of Son of God, in a sense in which it is ascribed to no other being." Some of them indeed understand the scriptures as ascribing this character to him in his mediatorial capacity and human nature only, and others to his original existence and his divine nature; but all of them believe in his peculiar sonship, and in his essential divinity; all of them hold that he is at once the Son of God, and himself also God.

"What an absurdity, you will say, is this!—The Son of God—himself God!—How can he be the Son of himself!" Unitarians are perpetually stumbling at this stumbling stone,

and casting it in the way of others. They impose upon themselves and upon others, by a species of sophistry, by which no wise man ought to be deceived. In this trite objection, as is very common with you in other instances, you beg the main question in debate. Only admit the Trinitarian distinction of Persons in the Godhead, and the pretended absurdity vanishes at once. If there are in the Godhead, three Persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and each of these three in inseparable union with the other two is God; then there is no absurdity in saying that Jesus Christ is both the Son of God, and himself God. This does not suppose, or imply, that he is the Son of himself; it only imports that he is the Son of the Father.

Neither does his being Son imply inferiority in nature to the Father. On the contrary, it imports sameness and equality of nature. Was not David of the same nature with Jesse, whose son he was, and of equal attributes and dignity? Is not a true and proper son always of the same nature with his father? Jesus is called *the son of man*, because he partakes of human nature and is truly man. Why then should we not understand, that he is called the SON OF GOD, the ONLY BEGOTTEN OF THE FATHER, because he also partakes of the divine nature, and is truly God.—It was so understood by the Jews, to whom the appellation, Son of God, as belonging to the Messiah, was familiar. Jesus said to them, “My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.” *Therefore* the Jews sought to kill him, *because he—said that God was his Father; [original, his own or proper Father] “making himself EQUAL with God.”* They understood him to call God his Father, not in a sense in which angels and men may call him their Father, but in a peculiarly high sense; in a sense which made God his natural Father, and himself in nature divine and equal with the Father. It was upon this very ground, that they afterwards persisted in charging him with blasphemy, and finally condemned him to death.—Jesus said to Nathanael, “Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the figtree, I saw thee.” Perceiving in this the divine attribute of omniscience, Nathanael replied, “Rabbi, thou art the Son of God;” evidently understanding this appella-

tion to import true divinity. It cannot reasonably be doubted, that such was the understanding of Peter and of Thomas, and the other disciples, when they acknowledged Jesus to be "the CHRIST, THE SON OF THE LIVING GOD," and worshipped him as their "LORD AND THEIR GOD."

The same was the understanding of the primitive Fathers. In his epistle to the Ephesians, St. Ignatius, who had conversed with the apostles, says, "There is one Physician, both fleshly and spiritual; made and not made; God incarnate, true life in death; BOTH OF MARY AND OF GOD; even Jesus Christ our Lord."* This passage shews not only that the blessed martyr acknowledged Jesus Christ to be God, of which his epistles afford most abundant evidence; but also that he understood Christ to be the Son of God in such a sense as to be of the same nature with the Father; that as the Son of Mary, he was made, and was man, as the Son of God, not made, and himself God. "If," says Justin Martyr, in his Dialogue with Trypho the Jew, "If ye had considered the things spoken by the prophets, ye would not have denied Christ to be God, *who is the SON of the unbegotten and ineffable God.*" Gregory Nyssen, as quoted by Dr. Waterlund,† speaking of the heretic Eunomius, says, "He says there is one only God Almighty. If he means a *Father* under the name of Almighty, he says the same that we do, and nothing different; but if he intends it of an almighty who is not a *Father*, he may preach circumcision if he pleases, along with his other Jewish tenets. The faith of christians looks to a *Father*. The Father indeed is all; [all things] he is most high, almighty, King of kings, and Lord of lords. Whatever titles sound high and great, they belong to the Father; and all things that are the Father's belong to the Son." The argument is, a Father implies a son of the same nature and attributes.—To the same effect Dionysius of Alexandria says, "The *Father* being eternal the *Son* must be eternal too, Light of Light. The names by me mentioned, [Father and Son] are undivided and inseparable. When I named the Father before I mentioned the Son, I signified the Son in the Father. If any of my false accusers suspect that because I

* Wake's Apostolic Fathers. † On the Trinity, chap. vi..

called God Creator and Former of all things, I made him Creator of Christ, let him consider that I before styled him Father, and so the Son was included in him."

Such was the doctrine of the primitive church, as might be shewn at large by many quotations. The apostles and the Fathers held Christ to be the Son of God not only "in a peculiarly high sense," but in a sense the highest possible: in a sense which implied his true divinity, his being of the same nature and one with the Father.

IV. A plain scriptural exhibition of the doctrine of the Trinity may serve to shew the fallacy and futility of many of your objections and representations, and the unsoundness and corruptness of your general system.

Dr. Clark, as before stated, held to a Trinity of Divine Persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. "With the first and supreme Cause, or Father of all things," he says, "there has existed from the beginning a *second* DIVINE PERSON, which is his Word or Son."—"With the Father and the Son, there has existed from the beginning a *third* DIVINE PERSON, which is the Spirit of the Father and of the Son."* Thus far he agrees with orthodox Trinitarians, ancient and modern, excepting that he makes the Father, *separately considered*, "the first and supreme Cause of all things;" and thus far, with the specified exception, he proves his doctrine by most abundant and decisive scriptural testimony, establishing, beyond all reasonable debate, the personal distinction, and the co-existence before all ages of the DIVINE THREE.

The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, then, are either three Divine Persons *united in one Godhead*, or else three *separate Divine Beings*. The former is the orthodox doctrine, the latter is the doctrine of Dr. Clark. But if the three Divine Persons are so many distinct beings, having each a separate existence, then must there not be three Gods?—Dr. Clark indeed held, as you correctly state, that "the Father *alone* is the supreme God;" and this he asserts with astonishing assurance, and in the way of begging the main question which it behoved him to prove. Be it however even so, that the Fa-

* Scripture Doctrine, Part II. Sections 2 and 3.

ther alone is the *supreme* God; then the other Divine Persons are two *inferiour* Deities. This conclusion, so obvious and unavoidable, is neither denied nor directly affirmed in Dr. Clark's book, but is favoured and forced upon the mind by the entire train of his argument. This is the grand absurdity of his most absurd system. If there was ever a Tritheist in christendom, Dr. Clark was one; and if "the liberal christians in this part of our country agree substantially with Dr. Clark," instead of being Unitarians, they are Tritheists.

In opposition to this tritheistical scheme, orthodox christians hold that the three Divine Persons are *united in one Godhead*. This we believe to be the plain scriptural doctrine: for while the scriptures distinctly reveal to us the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and abundantly ascribe to each of the Three, divine names, attributes, works, and honours; yet they assure us throughout, that there is but one God, and utterly preclude the doctrine of inferiour Deities.

Though the unity of the three Divine Persons in *one Godhead* involves mystery which, probably, no finite mind will ever fully explore; yet the scriptures open to us a vista of this wonderful glory. Jesus in his memorable intercessory prayer with his disciples, says, "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; that they all may be one; AS THOU FATHER ART IN ME AND I IN THEE, *that they all may be one in us.*" And christians are abundantly exhorted in the scriptures to seek and preserve the most perfect unity.—In what does this unity consist? Undoubtedly in being, as St. Paul expresses it, "perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment,"—"being knit together in love." When christians are thus in mind, in judgment, and in love, perfectly joined and knit together, they are in a most important and interesting sense one. They have "one Spirit and one hope;—one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is in them all." They have the same views of divine truth,—of God, of Christ, of the Holy Spirit,—of the gospel, of the way of holiness and life, of the kingdom of grace and of glory; they love and seek the same things; their thoughts, their

feelings, their desires, their pursuits are in harmony.—The more nearly christians think, and speak, and love, and pursue the same things, and the more intimately they are acquainted with each others minds and hearts, the closer and the more blessed is their union. Were they perfectly holy; had they also exactly the same thoughts on every subject, the same views of every object, the same affections and regards towards every being and thing; and had they moreover a perfect knowledge of each others minds and hearts, their union would be most complete. Though a union so complete probably can never exist between finite minds, as they will always have different capacities and degrees of knowledge, and can never be perfectly intimate with all the feelings and thoughts of each other; yet a union of this *kind* does exist in greater or less degree among believers, and will increase as they are more and more sanctified through the truth, and as they advance in the knowledge of God, of Christ, and of one another, until it attain its highest perfection in the heavenly world.—This is the oneness into which Jesus prayed that his people might be brought, and which he *resembled* to that which exists between him and his Father.

The union, however, of Christ's people, whatever resemblance it may bear, falls infinitely short of the unity of the ever-blessed Trinity. "I," says Christ, "I and the Father are one." "Believe me, that I am in the Father and the Father in me." "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." "As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father." "The Son can do nothing of himself, but what [but *as*, Campbell's Translation] he seeth the Father do; for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise." "The Father loveth the Son." "I love the Father."* These passages express all that is above described, as comprised in the union of Christ's people, and vastly more.—*The Son is in the bosom of the Father*; perfectly intimate with the Father, and with all his mind and heart. *As the Father knows him, even so he knows the Father*. It will not be doubted even by Unitarians, that the Father knows the Son perfectly, as he knows all other beings: knows him intuitively; has an

* John x, 30. x, 15. xiv, 11. v, 19. iii, 35. xiv, 31

immediate, intimate, complete perception of all that is in him. Even so then the Son knows the Father; has an intuitive perception, an intimate and perfect knowledge of all his Father's infinite mind and will. *The Son can do nothing of himself, but as he seeth the Father do.* Such is his union with the Father, so perfectly one is his will with the Father's will, that he cannot act separately or by himself; he can do nothing but in union with the Father, and as the Father does. *But what things soever the Father doeth, these also doeth the Son* [ὁμοίως] *in the same manner.* Such is their co-operation, their unity of will, and of action, that all that is done by the Father is in the same manner, and at the same time, done by the Son. *The Father loves the Son, and the Son loves the Father,* with perfect, infinite love.

But if the Son knows the Father even as the Father knows him, intuitively and perfectly; then he knows all that the Father knows. If he can do nothing, otherwise than in union with the Father; but does all things which the Father does, and as the Father does them; then his will and his power are the same with the will and the power of the Father. And if the Father and the Son have the same knowledge and wisdom, the same will and power, and are perfect in mutual love; then they must regard all other beings and things with the same views, the same feelings, and the same purposes.—*The Father is in the Son and the Son is in the Father.* All the infinite knowledge, and power, and wisdom, and goodness of the Father are in the Son. “In him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.” “He is the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person.” Therefore he says, “He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father also.”—Such is the unity of the Father and the Son.

Of the Holy Spirit we read:* “The Spirit searcheth all things, yea the deep things [τα βαθύ, the depths] of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God.”—*The Holy Spirit searcheth even the depths of God.* He then must know the Father and the Son, even as they know him. He knows the things of

* 1 Cor. ii, 10, 11.

God, as the spirit of a man knows what is in the man, that is, by intuition, by consciousness. As the spirit of a man is conscious to all that is in him,—knows intuitively his understanding, and will, and affections, his thoughts, volitions, and feelings; so the Holy Spirit is conscious to all that is in God; not only in himself personally considered, but also in the Father and in the Son: intuitively knows all the attributes, thoughts, affections, designs, and acts of the Godhead.—All the knowledge, then, all the wisdom, all the power, all the goodness, which are in the Father and in the Son, are also in the Holy Spirit. Accordingly he is made known to us, as the Spirit of wisdom and of knowledge, of grace and of holiness, of comfort and of fellowship; who reveals the mind and will of God to men,—“convinces the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment,—renews whom he will after the image of God, and dwells in all the saints,—acts in concurrence with the Father and the Son in the great economy of redemption, and carries into effect the glorious designs of divine wisdom and mercy. “When he the Spirit of truth is come,” says Christ, “he shall guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself, but whatsoever he shall hear that shall he speak.” He shall not act by himself alone, but only in union with the Father and the Son. “He shall glorify me; for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you. All things that the Father hath are mine; therefore said I, he shall take of mine, and shall shew it unto you.” According to the divine economy, all things pertaining to the salvation of mankind, are first the Father’s, then the Son’s, and then the Holy Spirit’s, to be by him dispensed, agreeably to the will of all the Three.

From this plain, scriptural view, it appears that the unity of the three Divine Persons is the highest and most perfect possible: not merely a *moral union*, such as exists between holy men and angels, but an *essential oneness*, such as constitutes one Godhead. If all the knowledge, and wisdom, and power, and goodness of the Father are also in the Son and in the Holy Spirit; then in their nature, in their attributes, in their designs, in their works, in their blessedness, in their glory, they are one. They are also essentially equal, each

to the other: for all that is in the Father, is in the Son, and in the Holy Spirit. What the Father is, the Son is, and the Holy Spirit is; what the Father knows, the Son knows, and the Holy Spirit knows; what the Father wills, the Son wills, and the Holy Spirit wills; what the Father does, the Son does, and the Holy Spirit does; what the Father enjoys, the Son enjoys, and the Holy Spirit enjoys. They exist, and act, and are blessed forevermore, as one God. This accounts in the most satisfactory manner, for the scriptures ascribing, as they do abundantly ascribe to each of the adorable Three, the same divine names, attributes, works, and honours.

In the Holy Trinity, however, though there is an essential equality, yet there is order, and there is subordination. The Father is first, the Son is second, the Holy Spirit is third, in order; and in relation especially to the great work of redemption, as the scriptures most plainly represent, the Son is subordinate to the Father, and the Holy Spirit, both to the Father and the Son. This sufficiently accounts for the pre-eminence which the scriptures assign to the Father, and from which Unitarians, and even Dr. Clark, most unwarrantably conclude that "the Father alone is the supreme God," and that the Son and Holy Spirit are inferior beings; as if there could be no such thing as *first* among *equals*, and as if *subordination* necessarily implied *inequality*; when, to every person of the least reflection or observation, the contrary is manifest. This therefore might suffice for an answer to the hackneyed Unitarian objection, founded on such passages of scripture as seem to import an inferiority of the Son to the Father: an objection which was answered in my second Letter, as it had been before a thousand times answered; but which nevertheless, you bring forward in your Remarks, p. 20, with an air of assurance and shout of triumph, as if it were fresh, and new, and absolutely unanswerable; and as if it were not at all incumbent on you to answer our argument, founded on the passages, in which the Son is represented as being essentially equal and one with the Father. It may be well however just to remark further and anew, that not only is the Son the second in the order of the Trinity, but, for our

redemption, he made himself of no reputation, took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of man. And surely it is not wonderful, that, while in his state of humiliation he appeared in fashion as a man, he should utter expressions, importing inequality; for as man he was unequal, infinitely unequal to God.

After Dr. Clark and others, you seem very fond of repeating, that "the Father alone is the supreme God;" and "we dare not, we *dare* not," you earnestly say, "approach Jesus Christ as the only living, the only true God."—There was occasion in old time for the serious interrogation, "Will ye accept his Person? Will ye contend for God?" Let me entreat you, Sir, not to imagine, that you do honour to the Father, by refusing to honour the Son. The Father does not exist "alone," nor is he *alone* the supreme God. Existing in essential, inseparable union with the Son and the Holy Spirit, whom he loves with infinite delight, it is only in union with them, being himself in them and they in him, that he is the supreme God. Neither does the Son exist alone, nor is he separately considered, "the only living, the only true God." But existing in essential, inseparable union with the Father and the Holy Spirit, he in them and they in him, he is the living and true God,—**"THE TRUE GOD AND ETERNAL LIFE."** We therefore dare not, we *dare* not refuse to honour him, even as we honour the Father. The Holy Spirit also, in essential, inseparable union with the Father, and the Son, he in them and they in him, is the living, true, and supreme God; and being so revealed to us, there was no occasion for an express command to worship him, as there was for one to worship *Christ in his mediatorial character*. There are not wanting examples, however, in the scriptures of the Holy Spirit being religiously invoked. And in that very institution, by which we are initiated into the christian community, a solemn act of worship is prescribed, to be done to the Holy Spirit in union with the other Divine Persons. The high command is, "Go, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the NAME of the FATHER, and of the SON, and of the HOLY SPIRIT. Shall men then dare to "put asunder what are joined together" in the very name and nature of God!

“Christianity,” says the Bishop of Durham,* whom you very justly style the “profound Butler,” “Christianity is not only an external institution of natural religion, and a new promulgation of God’s general providence, as righteous governor and judge of the world; *but it contains also a revelation of a particular dispensation of providence, carrying on by his Son and Spirit, for the recovery and salvation of mankind, who are represented in Scripture to be in a state of RUIN.* And in consequence of this revelation being made, we are commanded to be baptized, not only in the name of the FATHER, but also of the SON, and of the HOLY GHOST; and other obligations of duty, unknown before, to the Son and the Holy Ghost, are revealed.—The essence of natural religion may be said to consist in religious regards to God the Father Almighty; and the essence of revealed religion, as distinguished from natural, to consist in religious regards to the Son and the Holy Ghost. And the obligation we are under, of paying these religious regards to each of these Divine Persons respectively, arises from the respective relations which they each stand in to us. How these relations are made known, whether by reason or revelation, makes no alteration in the case; *because the duties arise out of the relations themselves, not out of the manner in which we are informed of them.* The Son and Spirit have each his proper office, in that great dispensation of Providence, the redemption of the world; the one our Mediator, the other our Sanctifier. Does not then the duty of religious regards to both these Divine Persons as immediately arise, to the view of reason, out of the very nature of these offices and relations, as the inward good will and kind intention, which we owe to our fellow creatures arises out of the common relation between us and them. If therefore Christ be indeed the Mediator between God and man, i. e. if Christianity be true; if he be indeed our Lord, our Saviour, and our GOD,—no one can say what may follow, not only the obstinate, but the careless disregard to him in those high relations.†

* Analogy, Part II. Chapter I. Sec. 2.

† “It is the ever blessed Trinity we invoke,” says Dr. Sherlock, “when we pray, *Our Father, which art in heaven.* For as they are inseparably One God,

This, Sir, I deem a very sufficient answer to what you have so boldly and unwarrantably objected to the worship of the Son and the Holy Spirit, both in the body of your Remarks, page 20, and in your Note, page 44, where you take it upon you to speak to us, as you are not a little accustomed to do, in the style and the tone of "a master of Israel" as follows: "We find not *one* passage in the scriptures commanding us to worship the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; not *one* precedent which authorizes such worship, and while we feel ourselves bound to exercise christian candour towards those who have adopted this form of worship," (i.e. the great body of orthodox christians in all ages!) "we are not without solemn apprehension, that, in this respect, they are guilty of irreverence towards the word of God, and of preferring to it the commandments and inventions of men."—We ought doubtless to listen attentively to the voice of serious admonition, from whatever quarter it may come; but I can assure you, Sir, I am by no means convinced that the many thousands of holy men in the orthodox church of Christ, who, from the days of the apostles to the present, have worshipped the Father,

so they are the inseparable Object of our worship; since this great mystery of a Trinity in Unity is so plainly revealed to us, we cannot worship this one Supreme God, but we must direct our worship to all the three Divine Persons in the unity of the same Godhead; for we do not worship this one Supreme God, unless we worship Father, Son, and Holy Ghost: and therefore whether we invoke each Person distinctly, or pray only to God, by the name of the most High God, or by the name of Father, or the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ it is all one; for Father, Son, and Holy Ghost is the One Supreme God, and the entire Object of our worship: and whoever worships one God, but not Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, does not worship the true God, not the God of the Christians. Before this was so plainly revealed, it was sufficient to worship One Supreme God, without any conception of the distinct Persons in the Godhead; but when it is plainly revealed to us, that this One Supreme God is Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, whoever does not worship Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, does not worship the true God; for the true God is Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and there is no God besides him; which I would desire our *Unitarians* (as they falsely call themselves) and our *Deists* carefully to consider. If any thing be fundamental in religion, it is the worship of the One true God, and if Father, Son, and Holy Ghost be this One true God, those who worship a God, who is not Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, do not worship the true God, and that I think is the true notion of idolatry. So that these men are so far from being christians, that I cannot see how they are worshippers of the true God: which should at least make them concerned to examine this matter with more care and less prejudice, than they have yet done."—Vindication of the Doctrine of the Trinity. Sec. VI.

Son, and Holy Spirit, have been "valiant for the truth upon the earth," and "shone as lights in the world" have had less reverence for the word of God, than those, who, from age to age, have either "gone out from them because they were not of them," or else have laboured more "privily," to introduce new doctrines, subversive of their holy faith and worship.

You say, p. 18, "We do indeed object to the Trinity that as it is often stated, it is an unintelligible proposition; and we say, that it is out of our power to believe a proposition of which we do not *know the meaning*." In p. 23, you represent the Trinity of Persons in the Godhead, and the union of the Divine and human natures in the person of Christ, as mere "phrases which cannot be defined, which convey to common minds no more meaning than words of an unknown tongue, and present to the learned only flitting shadows of thought, instead of clear and steady conceptions." And expressions to the same effect are scattered unsparingly in all your pamphlets, and in most Unitarian writings. The design is obvious.

But, Sir, do you believe no proposition of which you do not *know the meaning*? Take the proposition which you and other Unitarians would make the *single* essential article of the christian creed: *Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God*. Do you understand the meaning of this proposition? It is plain from what has before been exhibited, that you do not. You do not know who or what *Christ* is: whether a created, or an uncreated being; whether a creature whose existence had a beginning, or a demigod, or a "*somewhat*," who existed from eternity. As little do you know the meaning of the appellation, *the Son of God*. You "carry with you indeed an impression, that Jesus is the Son of God in a peculiarly high sense," but in what sense you do not understand. According to your own statement then, you do not believe the proposition, that "Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God!" Do not believe what you hold to be the single essential article of the christian faith!—Take another very simple proposition, which, though you will not allow it to be essential, holds nevertheless a distinguished place in the

christian scriptures: *Christ died for our sins*. Of this proposition you understand neither the *subject* nor the *predicate*. Concerning *Christ*, the subject, as already shewn, you are in infinite doubt; nor do you any better understand the meaning of the predicate, *died for our sins*. That some sort of being called Christ, in some sense died for our sins, you seem to suppose; but what sort of being he is, or in what sense he died for our sins, you do not know. This proposition, then, according to your declaration, you do not believe. Both these scriptural propositions, *Jesus is the Christ*, and *Christ died for our sins*, are "phrases which" to your mind "convey no more meaning than words of an unknown tongue, and present only flitting shadows of thought instead of clear and steady conceptions." It is so also, it should seem, in regard to many, if not most other, important scriptural propositions.

I shall not however concede, that the case is the same with us in regard to the Trinity. I do believe that we understand the meaning of the proposition, *the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are three Divine Persons in one God*. To remove a stumbling-block out of the way of Unitarians, we have indeed said, that we use the term, *person*, because we have no better word; and that we are not tenacious of the name, provided we have the thing. But this accommodating concession you attempt to ridicule. The term, *person*, indeed, when applied to created beings, denotes an intelligent agent, who has a *separate* existence. In this particular respect, we do not consider the term as applicable to the Father, Son, or Holy Spirit. For myself, however, I have not the least difficulty in applying the term to each of the Divine Three. I do believe that though they have not each a *separate* existence, but are all essentially united in one God; yet they are really and truly intelligent agents, each possessing all divine attributes, and performing in union with the other two, all divine works. And so far as I can perceive, I have as clear an understanding of the meaning of *person*, when applied to the three Divine agents united in one God, as when applied to angels or men, who have each a separate existence. I do not see, nor do I believe that you or any

other man can shew, why three Divine Persons may not so exist as to be one God, as well as three human persons so as to be three men; nor why the one God may not exist in three Persons as well as in one.

By no means do I admit, that we do not know the meaning of the proposition, that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are three Divine Persons in one God. It is a proposition affirming a plain matter of fact; and the matter of fact we understand and believe. The scriptures reveal to us the adorable Three, distinctly, and by name; to each of the Three they ascribe divine names, attributes, works, and honours; and yet they assure us that Jehovah our God [Aleim, *Gods*] is one Jehovah. From the scriptures then we learn, and understand, that there is a Father, a Son, and a Holy Spirit: that the Father possesses divine attributes, and is therefore God; that the Son possesses divine attributes, and is therefore God; that the Holy Spirit also possesses divine attributes, and is therefore God; and that the divine Three so exist together as to be one God. Now what is there in all this which, as matter of fact, we do not understand?—If you say we cannot understand how three divine Persons can so exist as to be one God, that is quite another thing; a thing not contained in the proposition; and therefore not necessary to be understood, in order to the doctrine being understood, and believed. The proposition does not pretend to declare the nature or manner of the union; but merely affirms the fact. And this we understand, as well as you understand the simple proposition, *there is a God*, *How* there can be a God, or *how* he exists, you do not understand. You may have much to say about self-existence, necessary being, infinity, and eternity, but you comprehend none of these things.—So of other facts.—*God is omnipresent*; but *how* he is in every place, you do not understand. *God is omniscient*; but *how* he knows all things, you do not understand. *God made the worlds out of nothing*; but *how* he made them you do not understand. Your soul and body are united in one man; but *how* they are united you do not know. You think; but *how* you cannot tell. You walk; but *how* your will moves your body, you cannot explain. The sun warms the earth; but

how? Vegetables grow out of the ground; *how?* Animals are nourished by food; *how?*—There is no end to this sort of statement and inquiry; for you do not know *how* any thing exists, or moves, or acts. You understand and you believe the plain matters of fact; but *how* things can be so, is utterly beyond your power to comprehend.

I do not deny, but have freely admitted that there is mystery in the Trinity. The mystery, however, does not lie in the matter of fact, as stated in the proposition, that three Divine Persons are one God, or that the one God exists in three Divine Persons; for this is revealed with sufficient clearness. The mystery lies in something beyond; something not contained in the proposition; something not revealed, but about which there may be endless speculation without any satisfactory results. It is so with respect to every thing else. The being of God, in the simplest statement of the truth, involves mystery upon mystery in unlimited accumulation. Yet a plain unsophisticated man finds no difficulty in understanding, or in believing the proposition, there is a God. No more does he find any difficulty, in understanding, or in believing the proposition, that God exists in three persons.

You may very well, therefore, spare yourself the concern which you would seem to feel for common christians. The plain humble christian, who reads his Bible much more, and to much better purpose, than the wise men of the world by whom he is despised, finds that in that sacred book all divine attributes, works, and honours are ascribed to the Father, who gave the Son to die for him; that the same divine attributes, works, and honours are ascribed to the Son, his adored Redeemer and Saviour; and the same to the Holy Spirit, his gracious Sanctifier and Comforter. He therefore understands that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are three Divine Persons in one God: and accordingly he believes, loves, and adores; undisturbed by the metaphysical and dialectical speculations, and the critical and sophistical subtilities of men, who, not content with the truth as divinely revealed, bewilder themselves, and labour to involve others, in endless perplexities and mazes:—just as plain men understand, believe, and act upon, other truths and facts, clearly

presented to their minds; while speculatists and philosophers, unable to account *how* things can be so, employ themselves in raising endless difficulties and objections; until one denies the existence of matter, another, the existence of created spirits, a third, the existence of a God, and thus between them all contrive to annihilate the universe. It is as true now as ever it was, and as much a reason of holy thankfulness, that the "things which are hidden from the wise and prudent are revealed unto babes." "The meek he will guide in judgment; the meek he will teach his ways."

The objection of mystery, which you and other Unitarians are perpetually urging against the Trinity, might be urged, and has been urged, with equal reason, and with equal force, against all the principal doctrines of religion, both natural and revealed. If we are to fly before this objection, we must fly not only from orthodoxy to unitarianism, but from unitarianism to Deism, from Deism to atheism, and from atheism to universal skepticism. If the pretensions of the "rational christian" to superiour wisdom, because, to avoid mystery, he denies the Trinity, are well founded; then for the same reason, the deist is wiser than the rational christian, the atheist is wiser than the deist, and the universal skeptick is the wisest man of all. And upon this scale, I suppose, the pretensions to wisdom are actually graduated.

"That this is a very mysterious doctrine," says Bishop Porteus, "we do not deny; but it is not more so than many other doctrines of the christian revelation, which we all admit, and which we cannot reject without subverting the foundation, and destroying the very substance and essence of our religion. The miraculous birth and incarnation of our blessed Lord, his union of the human nature with the divine, his redemption of mankind, and his expiation of their sins by his death on the cross;—these are doctrines plainly taught in scripture, and yet as incomprehensible to our finite understandings, as the doctrine of three Persons and one God. But what we contend for in all these instances is, that these mysteries, although confessedly *above* our reason, are not *contrary* to it. This is a plain and well known distinction, and in the present case an incontrovertible one. No one for

instance can say, that the supposition of three Persons in one God is contrary to reason. We cannot, indeed, *comprehend* such a distinction in the divine nature; but unless we know *perfectly* what that nature is, it is impossible for us to say that such a distinction may not subsist in it consistent with its unity.—Let not then the mysteries of the gospel ever be a rock of offence to you, or in any degree shake the constancy of your faith. They are inseparable from any religion, that is suited to the nature, to the wants, and to the *fallen state* of such a creature as man.—Laying aside all the superfluity of learning, and all the pride of human wisdom, let us hold fast to the profession of our faith, without wavering and without cavilling at what we cannot comprehend.—Let us resolutely beat down every bold imagination, every high thing that exalteth itself against the mysterious truths of the gospel; bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ, and receiving with meekness the ingrafted word, which is able to save our souls.”*

No, Sir, it is not for “flitting shadows of thought,” that we contend; it is for most substantial realities. It is for three Divine Persons, of illimitable perfection and glory,

* On Matt. Lec. xxiv. Does not, Sir, the Bishop of London in this passage, show as much of the meekness of wisdom, and of the spirit of the gospel, as your fraternity of Unitarians, who, you say, p. 19, “always declare that Scripture with one voice disowns the doctrine of the Trinity, and that of all the fictions of theologians, the doctrine of three persons in one God has perhaps the least countenance from the Bible!”

In this connexion you have seen fit to entertain the publick with a brief history of your own mind in relation to the Trinity; in which we are presented with an instance, similar to too many others, of a struggling and gradual decline from the principles of an orthodox education: principles to whose influence Dr. Priestly very frankly ascribes the habits of seriousness and devotion which remained with him, even after he had adopted sentiments confessedly less conducive to such habits. Did I think it proper thus to obtrude personal history, I could give you a very different account. I could tell you of one, who well remembers the day of enchanting temptation,—when his feet stood on slippery places,—when he felt himself strongly impelled to follow the *ignes fatui* of unitarian illusion; and who devoutly hopes never to forget the gracious hand which arrested his course, guided him back, and as he humbly trusts, fixed his feet on “*a stone, a tried stone, a sure foundation.*” But rather would I take leave to recommend to your very serious perusal a little book entitled *The Force of Truth.*

who have manifested towards us exceeding riches of grace and mercy, and to whom we owe supreme and everlasting love, and gratitude, and homage. Though we cannot by searching find them out unto perfection; yet we can thankfully receive the testimony which they have condescended to give us respecting themselves and one another, and humbly adore the ineffable and incomprehensible glory which they have opened to our view. In the most Holy Three in One, we see what can never be seen in a single Divine Person:— we see a *society*, infinitely perfect and blessed.—When we turn our thoughts from the Trinity to one Divine Person, inhabiting eternity in solitary existence, we find it impossible to conceive how he can be happy. We can form no conception of happiness without love, nor of perfect happiness where love has not an adequate object. But the most exalted creatures are infinitely below the Deity; the whole created universe is as nothing in comparison with him. If then he existed in one solitary person, where could he find an adequate object of infinite love, and how could he be infinitely happy?—When we contemplate the Trinity, a far different view is presented to our minds. **GOD IS LOVE.** The three adorable Persons, unlimited in all perfections and excellencies, inhabit eternity together; dwell everlastingly in each other, in mutual, perfect, unmeasurable love. Thus infinitely happy themselves, they unitedly delight in communicating happiness to their creatures. Their own society of boundless love and boundless happiness, is the archetype and centre of that holy, and blessed, and numberless fellowship of angels and of the redeemed from among men, who are to be “gathered together in one,” around the throne of everlasting glory, with immortal joys, and unceasing praises.—Call this, Sir, mystery, mysticism, or what you please;—it is a theme on which my mind delights to dwell; and which I cannot exchange for the solitary Deity, and the philosophical heaven of Unitarians.

V. In pp. 13, 14, and 19, of your Remarks, I find the following passages. “With respect to the **ATONEMENT**, the great body of liberal christians seem to me to accord precisely

with the author of "Bible News," or rather both agree very much with the profound Butler. Both agree that Jesus Christ, by his sufferings and intercession, obtains forgiveness for sinful men, or that on account, or in consequence of what Christ has done and suffered, the punishment of sin is averted from the penitent, and blessings forfeited by sin are bestowed. On the question, which is often asked, how the death of Christ has this blessed influence, they generally think that the scriptures have given us little light, and that it is the part of wisdom to accept the kind appointment of God, without constructing theories for which the materials must be chiefly borrowed from our own imagination."—"It is indeed very true that Unitarians say nothing about *infinite* atonement, and they shudder when they hear, what Dr. Worcester seems to assert, that the ever blessed God suffered and died on the cross. They reject these representations, because they find not *one* passage in scripture which directly asserts them or gives them support. Not *one* word do we hear from Christ or his apostles of an *infinite* atonement. In not *one* solitary text is the efficacy of Christ's death in obtaining forgiveness, ascribed to his being the Supreme God. All this is theology of man's making, and strongly marked with the hand of its author."—Upon these passages I have to remark:

1. If there is presented to the mind of man a subject which, more than any other, should repress the spirit of haughty disdain and fastidious cavil, it is that of the atonement. If ever man should feel and show profound humility, tenderness, and reverence, it is when he approaches the cross of Him, who, though he thought it not robbery to be equal with God, yet humbled himself, and became obedient unto death.—However much of a spirit opposite to the meekness and lowliness of Christ might be deemed suitable, to give effect to personal invective and popular harangue; but little of it surely was necessary, in making a mere statement of your sentiments on the most affecting and awful of all subjects.

2. You are not, I presume, entirely unacquainted with the history or the writings of the primitive age of the christian

church. If not, you doubtless know that, in that age, both Pagans and Jews reproached the christians with worshipping a *crucified God*; and that the christians did not shrink from the reproach, nor think it incumbent on them to make the offence of the cross to cease. "Permit me," said St. Ignatius, when on his way to the scene of his martyrdom, "Permit me to imitate the passion, (the sufferings,) of *my God*."—"Consider the times; and expect HIM *who is above all time, eternal, invisible, though for our sakes made visible; impalpable, and impassible, yet for us subjected to sufferings; enduring all manner of ways for our salvation.*"—At this you "shudder." Yet I suppose the blessed martyr, who had been conversant with the apostles, and by them ordained a bishop, had some right understanding of the doctrine of Christ crucified. You "shudder" too at the words of Paul, in their plain and genuine sense. "Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of man, and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient unto death even the death of the cross." For in these very words, I summed up my statement, to which you refer when you speak of your shuddering; and more than what is expressed in them I have no where expressed on this topick. And yet I must believe that Paul as well understood the doctrine of Christ crucified, as any Unitarian of this enlightened age. This same apostle, in his pathetick address to the elders of Ephesus, according to our common reading, said, "Feed the church of God which he hath purchased with his own blood."* The apostle John also, according to our common reading, says, "Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us."† If by various readings you might be justified in doubting the genuineness of the common reading in these passages; yet I must be allowed to deny that you are warranted in the bold assurance, with which you assert that the scriptures give no "support to these representa-

* Acts xx, 28.

† 1 John iii, 16.

tions." On the contrary, I contend that the scriptures do represent and affirm, that the same Jesus Christ, who is God as well as man, suffered and died on the cross.

The phrase "the ever blessed God suffered and died on the cross," is not mine. I said that we "hold Jesus Christ to be God and man united in one person, and that this *one complex person suffered and died.*" Do you perceive no difference, Sir, between these two statements? If not, I beg you to consider the subject until you understand it, before you again undertake to state what I "seem to assert." There is the same sort of fallacy in this representation of yours, as in that which makes us say, that "Jesus Christ is the only living, the only true God."* We do not say nor hold, that Jesus Christ is the only living and true God, *separate* from the Father and the Holy Spirit. So neither do we say, that the ever blessed God, separately from man, suffered and died; but we do say that Jesus Christ, *as God and man in one person*, did suffer and die. This we believe the scriptures most fully teach, and at this we verily think no christian ought to shudder. We know however that this fundamental doctrine, this corner stone, has always been to some a stumbling block, and to others foolishness.

You seem to have a very particular antipathy to "an *infinite* atonement." This phrase again is not mine; nor do I know why you should introduce it in the manner

* Of the same sort of fallacy you avail yourself habitually. A very striking instance of it occurs in your note, p. 46, where you take upon you to say, that "Unitarianism, besides being directly affirmed in particular passages, runs through the whole scriptures, appears on the whole current of sentiment and language in the Old and the New Testament." This imposing assertion could have been made only under cover of an ambiguity. You would not venture to assert, in unequivocal terms, that in a single "passage" of scripture it is "directly affirmed" that there is but *one person in the Godhead*, nor that this doctrine "runs through the whole scriptures," &c. But the scriptures do teach, directly in particular passages, and implicitly throughout, that there is but *one God*; and to this doctrine you here apply the ambiguous term *Unitarianism*, as if Trinitarians held to more Gods than one. This, Sir, is practising, as an honest man should be very cautious of doing. In opposition to another assertion of yours in this same connexion, I should feel perfectly safe in affirming, that the doctrine of the Trinity, instead of depending for support "on a small number of disconnected texts," "runs through the whole scriptures," and pervades the entire system of revealed truth.

you have done, unless it were to make an erroneous impression, as if the question between us were, whether the atonement was *infinite*. The question, however, is, whether the death of Christ was truly and properly an *atonement*,—an *expiatory sacrifice for sin*. Let this question first be determined, and then if you please attend to the other. Your practice of perpetually confounding things, and varying and misstating the points in debate, whatever other purpose it may serve, certainly can serve no good purpose.

In reply to your peremptory assertion, that “in not *one* solitary text is the efficacy of Christ’s atonement ascribed to his being the supreme God,” I affirm that the scriptures certainly do, not in one solitary text only, but in many passages, and with one voice, ascribe the efficacy of Christ’s atonement, to *his divine dignity*. Not to cite particular passages, it may suffice to refer to the epistle to the Hebrews entire; in which the apostle sets out with asserting and proving *the divine dignity of the Son*; and then upon this firm basis, founds the doctrine of his high priesthood, and his propitiatory sacrifice. In the course of his argument he uses such expressions as these: “Such an High Priest became us.”* “Neither by the blood of goats and calves, *but by his own blood*, he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us. For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh; *how much more shall the blood of Jesus Christ, who, through the eternal Spirit, offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?*”† In vain, Sir, do you attempt, by bold and random assertions, to escape from the solemn inference, so odious to many, that we are sinners,

* Heb. vii, 26.

† Heb. ix, 12, 13, 14. “When the Son of God, who is one with the Father, takes flesh and blood upon him, and becomes God manifest in the flesh, here God and man are united in one complex person, and hereby we enjoy an all-sufficient Saviour, a Reconciler beyond all exception, a sacrifice of atonement, equal to the guilt of our transgressions. And so far as I can judge, it is on this account one apostle says, “God redeemed the church with his own blood;” and another asserts,

naturally in a ruined, condemned state; and that in order to our salvation, there was need of such a propitiation for our sins, as the scriptures set forth in Jesus Christ crucified.

3. "With respect to Christ's atonement, you say, the great body of liberal christians seem to me to accord precisely with the author of "Bible News," or rather both agree very much with the profound Butler." Most devoutly, Sir, do I wish that we had more evidence of this, than that it "*seems*" so to you. Most gratefully should I rejoice to know, that you, and others of your liberal brethren, really agree, on this momentous point, with Bishop Butler. But why refer to this distinguished writer? Did you mean to make the impression that your orthodox opponents here materially differ from him? The truth is, that my statement of the doctrine of atonement, is so exactly in agreement with his, that my readers might be ready to suppose, that when making it, I had his book open before me. I wish you had seen fit to quote him at large, and recommend his sentiments to your readers. As you have not done it, I will take leave to make a quotation.

After a very lucid and forcible argument to shew the reasonableness and credibility of the doctrine, Bishop Butler proceeds to say,* "The particular manner in which Christ interposed in the redemption of the world, or his office as *mediator* in the largest sense *between God and man*, is thus represented to us in the scripture. '*He is the light of the world;*' the revealer of the will of God in the most eminent sense.

"Hereby perceive we the love of God, that he laid down his life for us." And I do not yet see sufficient reason why that expression of St. Paul may not be referred to in the same sense, "How much more shall the blood of Jesus Christ, who through the eternal spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience," &c. If the eternal Spirit signify the divine nature or Godhead, which dwelt bodily in the man Jesus, then the dignity of his complete person is made the foundation of the value of his blood. This dignity of the Godhead which was personally united to the man who suffered, spreads an infinite value over his sufferings and merit: and this renders them equal to that infinite guilt and demerit of sin, which would have extended the punishment of man to everlasting ages. The infinite dignity of the person suffering answers to the infinite dignity of the person offended, and so takes away the necessity of the everlasting duration of it." Watts's Sermons on Atonement.

* Analogy, Part II. Chap. V. Sec. 6.

HE IS A PROPITIATORY SACRIFICE;* *the Lamb of God*;† and as he voluntarily offered himself up, he is styled our high priest.‡ And, which seems of peculiar weight, he is described before hand in the Old Testament, under the same character of a priest, and AN EXPIATORY VICTIM.§ And whereas it is objected, that all this is merely by way of allusion to the sacrifices of the Mosaick law, the apostle on the contrary affirms, that *the law was a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things*;¶ and that *the priests that offer gifts according to the law—serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things, as Moses was admonished of God, when he was about to make the tabernacle. For see, saith he, that thou make all things according to the pattern shewed to thee in the mount*;** i. e. the Levitical priesthood was a shadow of the priesthood of Christ, in like manner as the tabernacle made by Moses, was according to that shewed him in the mount. The priesthood of Christ and the tabernacle in the mount, were the originals; of the former of which the Levitical priesthood was a type, and of the latter the tabernacle made by Moses was a copy. The doctrine of this epistle then plainly is, that *the legal sacrifices were allusions to the great and final atonement; to be made by the BLOOD OF CHRIST*; and not that this was an allusion to those. Nor can any thing be more express or determinate than the following passage. *It is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sin. Wherefore, when he cometh into the world he saith, sacrifice and offering, i. e. of bulls, and of goats, thou wouldst not, but a body hast thou prepared me.—Lo I come to do thy will, O God.—By which will we are sanctified, through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.*†† And to add one passage more of the like kind. *Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many, and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time, without sin, i. e. without*

* Rom. iii, 25, and v, 11. 1 Cor. v, 7. Eph. v, 2. 1 John ii, 2.

† John i, 29, 36, and throughout the book of Revelation.

‡ Throughout the epistle to the Hebrews.

§ Isa. liii. Dan. ix, 24. Ps. cx, 4.

¶ Heb. x, 1.

** Heb. viii, 4, 5.

†† Heb. x, 4, 5, 7, 9, 10.

BEARING SIN AS HE DID AT HIS FIRST COMING, BY BEING AN OFFERING FOR IT, without having our *iniquities* again laid upon him, without being any more A SIN OFFERING; unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time, without sin unto salvation.* Nor do the inspired writers at all confine themselves to this manner of speaking concerning the SATISFACTION of Christ, but declare an efficacy in what he did and suffered, additional to, and beyond, mere instruction, example and government, in great variety of expression.”—The Bishop in this connexion proceeds to quote nearly thirty texts, many of which are the very same which are quoted in my Second Letter, to shew that we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins through the death of Christ, AS AN EXPIATORY SACRIFICE.

I repeat it, Sir,—most gratefully should I rejoice to know, that you and your liberal brethren agree with Dr. Butler in these orthodox views of the atonement. But,

4. It is to be lamented, that you have thought it necessary to take especial care, not to leave the matter in a general, unqualified reference to Butler; but proceed to qualify, until you fritter the doctrine to atoms, and scatter it in the wind. “Both agree, you say, that Jesus Christ, by his sufferings and intercession, obtains forgiveness for sinful men, OR *that on account, OR IN CONSEQUENCE of what Christ has done and suffered, the punishment of sin is averted from the penitent, and blessings, forfeited by sin, are bestowed.*” Such are the ambiguous words which you delight to use. Undoubtedly, Sir, when penning this studied sentence, you were perfectly aware, that Unitarians of the lowest class, even such as make Jesus Christ a mere fallible and peccable man, and utterly discard, and irreverently ridicule the doctrine of atonement, would make no difficulty of giving to this representation their general assent. They would readily admit, that, “*in consequence of what Christ has done and suffered, the punishment of sin is averted from the penitent, and blessings, forfeited by sin, are bestowed;*” as, with equal readiness, and in the same sense, they would admit, that the same benefits are conferred, *in consequence of what Paul and other*

* Heb. xxviii.

good men have done and suffered.—But is this, Sir, “agreeing very much with the profound Butler!”* I deeply regret to say, that I can see in this statement very little evidence of a true belief in the atonement. At any rate, whether you believe in the atonement in any proper sense, or not, it is lamentably manifest, not from this passage only, but from uniform representations throughout your three pamphlets, that you consider the atonement as comparatively unimportant, and hold that men who utterly reject it, may nevertheless be very good christians.

There is a wide difference between acknowledging Jesus Christ, merely as a prophet and a preacher of righteousness, who laboured, interceded, and died, to impart, to confirm, and to impress divine instruction, that men might be induced to *repent* and trust in a merciful God for pardon and eternal

* It is agreeing, I acknowledge, very much with the popular Price, whom possibly you had in your eye as your model, and who in a Sermon, lately republished with the high *imprimatur* of the liberal party, says, “Give me but the fact, that Christ is the *resurrection*, and the *life*, and EXPLAIN IT AS YOU WILL. Give me but this single truth, that *eternal life is the gift of God through Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour*, and I shall be perfectly easy with respect to the contrary opinions which are entertained about the dignity of Christ; about his nature, person, and offices; and the manner in which he saves us. Call him, if you please, simply a *man*, endowed with extraordinary powers; or call him a *supraangelick* being, who appeared in human nature for the purpose of accomplishing our salvation; or say, (if you can admit a thought so shockingly absurd!) that it was the second of three co-equal persons in the Godhead, forming one person with a human soul, that came down from heaven and suffered and died on the cross: Say, that he saves us merely by being a messenger from God to reveal to us eternal life, and to confer it upon us; or say on the contrary, that he not only *reveals* to us eternal life, and confers it upon us, but has *obtained* it for us by offering himself a propitiatory sacrifice on the cross, and making satisfaction to the justice of the Deity for our sins: I shall think such differences of little moment, provided the fact is allowed, that Christ did rise from the dead, and will raise us from the dead; and that all righteous penitents will, through God’s grace in him, be accepted and made happy for ever.”—So then it is “of very little moment,” whether we worship Christ as God, or regard him only as a mere man;—whether we recognise his death as a propitiatory sacrifice for our sins, or only as one instance among many of mere martyrdom;—whether with bleeding hearts we come to his cross, humbly relying on the merits of his death for pardon and life, or trust in ourselves that we are “righteous penitents!” By no dread of reproach can I be deterred from declaring, that neither the name nor the popularity of Dr. Price, nor of any other man or society of men, ought to protect sentiments like these from the decided reprobation of every person who bows at the name of Jesus, or hopes for salvation through faith in his blood:

life; and believing on him, not only as a prophet and a preacher, but also as our great High Priest, by whose blood we have redemption, even the forgiveness of sins, and our Surety, who is the end of the law for righteousness unto every one that believeth on him. This is a main, a radical point between the orthodox and Unitarians. You acknowledge Jesus as a prophet and a preacher of righteousness, and make such an acknowledgement of him essential to the christian name; but his priesthood and suretyship, with his propitiatory sacrifice, and vicarious righteousness, you either deny, or hold to be non-essential and of little importance. A mere man, for aught that appears, might have been authorized and inspired to do all which Jesus did in the way of revealing, preaching, and attesting the mind and will of God, for the instruction of mankind; indeed Paul did *more* in this way than Jesus in person did; and so long as you hold this to be all which was essential to our salvation, it is not strange that you do not see it necessary that the Saviour should be God as well as man.

But, Sir, do not the scriptures dwell infinitely more on Christ's office as priest, than on his office as prophet? Was it not to him, chiefly as the great High Priest, who by the one offering of himself was to obtain eternal redemption for us, that the Mosaick economy entire, and all the instituted sacrifices, from the beginning of the world to his incarnation, looked as their antitype? Did not his harbinger John publicly announce him as *THE LAMB of God that taketh away the sin of the world?* Was not salvation by his death, as a propitiation for sin, the burden of apostolick preaching? Was it not the express design of the Epistle to the Hebrews at large, to establish his priesthood, and the necessity and efficacy of his sacrifice? And do not the scriptures most abundantly represent, that the faith which it requires of us, is not merely an assent to his divine instructions, but also and especially a fiducial trust in his atoning blood?

By what authority then can any one either deny the atonement, or represent it as doubtful, or of little importance. When the scriptures so constantly insist on the propitiatory sacrifice of our great High Priest, and so directly found upon it

the doctrine of justification unto life, and all the immortal hopes of man; who can be authorized to set this foundation aside, or represent it as not essential to the christian faith? When, from the day the Saviour was promised, it was only by sacrifice, typical of the great and final atonement to be made by him, that fallen men were allowed to draw near to God, *and without shedding of blood there was no remission*; are we now, since the Saviour has come, and the atonement has been made,—are we now to be taught that the fact of the sacrifice is doubtful, that the truth of it is unimportant, that faith in it is unnecessary, and that, if we please, we may utterly reject it, and boldly, and without guilt or danger, approach the holy God, trusting in ourselves as “righteous penitents!”

If it is not necessary to believe in Christ’s priestly office and work, why is it necessary to believe in him as a prophet and messenger of God? If we may innocently and safely deny his death to be *propitiatory*, why may we not, with equal innocence and safety, deny his instructions to be *divine*? Many who have denied revelation altogether, have nevertheless acknowledged the pre-eminent excellence of the character, and of the instructions of Jesus; and have been men of distinguished talents, and of exemplary morality. Why is not this sufficient? If they acknowledge the morality of the gospel to be excellent, and hold the necessity of repentance of all sin, and of a life conformed to the principles of righteousness and virtue; why is it necessary for them to believe that Jesus and the apostles were divinely commissioned and inspired?—Is not the difference between deists of this description and unitarians vastly less, than between unitarians and orthodox christians? Such deists agree with unitarians in acknowledging Jesus as the most excellent of all teachers; both profess to reverence his instructions; both hold the necessity of repentance and a good life; both believe that “righteous penitents” will be saved from “the punishment of sin,” and receive from a God of infinite goodness and mercy the reward of everlasting life; and both agree in rejecting the propitiatory sacrifice of Christ, and in refusing to trust for pardon and salvation in the vicarious merits of his death.—They are

near to each other,—next door neighbours.—But between them both and orthodox christians the distance is great.

If in any case, a *surety*, or a *substitute* is proposed on one part, and not accepted or consented to on the other, the proposal in that case fails, and the debtor, or the offender is still answerable solely in his own person. God proposes Christ crucified to us as our surety, our substitute, our propitiation: it is by faith in him, as thus set forth, that we consent to the proposal. If we acknowledge Christ as our surety, our substitute, the propitiation for our sins, and believe on him as such, we consent to God's gracious proposal, and there is a settled, a fixed agreement or covenant between him and us; an agreement or covenant respecting the cancelling of our sins, our renewal after the image of God, and the entire concern of our eternal salvation. If we do not thus acknowledge and believe on Christ, but deny and reject his propitiatory sacrifice; the momentous proposal fails as to us: we are without a surety, without a ransom for our souls, without the benefit of a propitiation; and must stand at the bar of the righteous Judge solely upon our own personal footing!—“If I forsake the gospel of Christ and his atonement for sin, whither shall my guilty conscience fly to find a better relief.—Nature shews me no way to recompense the justice of God for my innumerable sins. Nature shews me nothing which God will accept in the room of my own *perfect* obedience, or in the room of my everlasting punishment. If I leave thee, O Jesus, whither shall I go? Thy sufferings are the spring of my hope of pardon, and my eternal life depends on thy painful and shameful death.—O may I ever maintain a constant exercise of faith on the Son of God as my great High Priest! May I keep up a lively and delightful sense of the *all-sufficiency of his atonement* upon my spirit, that this, *which is the glory of my religion*, may also be the daily life of my soul.—Let me call to mind the solemn seasons of transaction between Christ and my soul. Have I not resigned myself to him as an all-sufficient Saviour, to deliver me both from the guilt and the power of every sin? *Have I not trusted in the blood of his atonement, and felt the quickening power of his Spirit as the fruit of his blood?* Has he not raised me to a new life?—I

would rise to join with the blessed acclamations, the holy songs of the saints on high, while they behold their exalted Saviour. How sweet their songs! How loud their acclamations! This is the man, **THE GOD-MAN WHO DIED FOR ME!** 'This is the glorious Person; **THE LAMB OF GOD, WHO WASHED ME FROM MY SINS IN HIS OWN BLOOD!**'*—Such, Sir, are the sentiments, inspired by faith in the atoning blood of Christ. Where do we find sentiments like these uttered by a Unitarian. We hear much of their "talents" and their "learning," their "purity" and their "virtues;" but little—but nothing—*of their glorying only in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.*—A true believer in Christ's atonement never will, never can consider it, or represent it as doubtful or unimportant; never will or can admit any other foundation of hope for fallen mankind.

VI. After stating what "*seem*" to you to be the prevalent sentiments of the liberal party, you are pleased to say, p. 14, "My motive for making the preceding statement, is no other than a desire to contribute whatever may be in my power to the peace of our churches. I have hoped that by this representation, some portion of the charity which has been expressed towards Dr. Clark, and the author of "*Bible News*," may be extended towards their Unitarian brethren; and that thus the ecclesiastical division which is threatened may be averted." This may be considered as the basis of the fervid rhapsodies and inflammatory harangues, with which your subsequent pages are filled; and in which to a degree seldom surpassed, you have shewn yourself violent for charity, and "*fierce for moderation*;" and, with little restraint, have appealed to passions and prejudices to which a wise man, engaged in a good cause, would scarcely, in the most desperate extremity, refer for a decision, or apply for aid. In the course therefore of my remarks, in relation to this passage, I shall have occasion to take notice of the most important of the many exceptionable things, which in your varied strains of declamation you have so copiously poured forth.

* Watts.—Sermon on Atonement.

Charity ought undoubtedly to be extended to every class of Unitarians, and to all men. But what is CHARITY? It is love—holy love:—such as the everlasting Father manifested, when he gave his Son for the redemption of our ruined race; such as Jesus Christ displayed, when he “bore our sins in his own body on the tree,” and “tasted death for every man;” such as the apostles exhibited, when they made a voluntary sacrifice of every earthly consideration, for the sake of bringing men to the knowledge and acknowledgement of the truth, that they might be saved. But with all his infinite love, God has never regarded the errors of mankind as either innocent or safe; but with awful majesty has borne his decided testimony against them, and declared that the children of men have all gone aside, that destruction and misery are in their ways, and that he will bring to nought the wisdom of this world. Jesus Christ also, though possessed of the same infinite love, has solemnly testified, that “men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil;” that “the world hates both him and his Father;”—hates also his true followers, “because they are not of the world, but he has chosen them out of the world.”* And he exercised perfect *charity* when he said, “Wo unto you, scribes, and pharisees, hypocrites! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men; for ye neither go in yourselves, nor suffer them that are entering to go in.—Ye build the tombs of the prophets and garnish the sepulchres of the righteous, and say, If we had been in days of our fathers we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets.”†—“Ye are of the world.—If ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins.”‡—It was in the spirit of pure and fervent *charity*, that the devoted apostle of the Gentiles so solemnly averred: “I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, that I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ, for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh, who are Israelites.”—“For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according

* John iii, 19; vii, 7; xv, 17, 18, 24.

† Matt. xxiii, 13—33.

‡ John viii, 24.

to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God."* In the same charitable spirit, he said to the Galatians, "I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ, unto another gospel: which is not another: but there are some that trouble you and would pervert the gospel of Christ."—"O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth." "I would that they were even cut off that trouble you."† And in the same holy love, he declared to the Corinthians, "We preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Greeks foolishness;"‡—exhorted the Romans, "Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned, and avoid them;"§—warned the Colossians, "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ;"||—and charged Timothy, "to war a good warfare, holding faith and a good conscience, which some having put away, concerning faith have made shipwreck. Of whom," he says, "are Hymeneus and Alexander, whom I have delivered unto Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme."**—The disciple also, whom Jesus loved was in the exercise of the most enlarged and elevated *charity*, when he wrote as follows: "Little children, there are many antichrists:—but ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things. I have not written unto you, because ye know not the truth; but because ye know it, and that no lie, [no false doctrine] is of the truth."—"Beloved, believe not every spirit; but try the spirits whether they are of God; because many false prophets are gone out into the world.—They are of the world; therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them. We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth and the spirit of error."—"Whosoever transgresseth and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He

* Rom. ix, 1—4; x, 2, 3.

§ Rom. xvi, 17.

† Gal. i, 6—9; iii, 1; v, 12.

‡ Col. ii, 8.

‡ 1 Cor. i, 23.

** 1 Tim. i, 18—20.

that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed; for he that biddeth him God speed, is partaker of his evil deeds.”*

This, Sir, is genuine—divine charity:—charity, which can discern between truth and error; which rejoiceth in the truth, and in the light, the happiness, and the holy fellowship of those who embrace and obey it; and, while it rejects and condemns error, deeply deplores the darkness, the danger, and the delusive communion of those who yield to its fascinations, and ardently desires and seeks their conviction and salvation:—which adores the Lord Jesus with a reverence too holy to trifle with his sacred institutions, and regards all men with an affection too benevolent to cheer them in the ways of destruction. Yes, genuine charity *rejoiceth in the truth*. It is essentially love of truth; and it regards God and Christ, saints and sinners, all beings and things, according to truth. It delights in truth as the foundation of all pure religion, genuine virtue, and substantial happiness;—as of the first importance to the essential and everlasting interests of mankind. In all ages of the world, therefore, it has been the grand effort of charity to convince men of their errors, to rescue them from their delusions, and to bring them to the knowledge of the truth. In this arduous work, it has endured the contradictions and reproaches, the unappeasable resentments and varied persecutions, of the erring, and proud, and adverse world. The palms and crowns, which distinguish the hosts of holy martyrs before the throne of God and the Lamb, were all won by the labours, and sufferings, and conflicts of charity, in maintaining, defending, and propagating the truth upon the earth.

How different from this, in its nature and in its labours, is the misnamed charity for which you contend;—a charity which is fondly indulgent to all error, and inimical only to the truth; which consists in thinking or admitting that men may be good and acceptable in the sight of God, though they utterly reject the gospel as a “cunningly devised fable,” and

* 1 John ii, 18—27; iii, 1—6; 2 John 9—11.

ought to be held in *christian* fellowship, if they only acknowledge that "Jesus is the Christ," though they disbelieve, and condemn every essential doctrine of christianity. This spurious charity, it ought to be distinctly noted, may be possessed, in its utmost extent, by the most unboly men; by infidels of every species of disbelief,—by libertines of every degree of licentiousness. It is an indisputable fact, that the open scoffers at religion, the "lovers of their own selves," the "proud," the "blasphemers," the "covetous," the "fierce," the "despisers of them that are good," can shew as much of this sort of charity, and clamour as loudly for it, as the very best of your liberal christians. Listen to the pagan writers with whom the primitive christians had to contend,—to the free-thinkers, deists, and atheists of modern times,—to the "unruly and vain-talkers," the "murmurers and complainers," who "speak evil of things that they understand not," and utter "great swelling words of vanity:"—all these, while they strenuously oppose all the efforts of holy love, both divine and human, to reclaim men from "the error of their ways unto the wisdom of the just;" yet with one voice cry out for charity and liberality, denounce christians as so uncharitable and illiberal as to deserve the execration of the world, and charge upon them all the guilt of all the divisions, contentions, and persecutions, of which truth and religion have been innocently the occasion.

"Are we blind also?" was indignantly said by some of the masters of Israel to the great Teacher from heaven, who would have "guided their feet into the way of peace." To the inspired apostles, to the successive ministers of Christ, and to others who have been valiant for the truth upon the earth, similar language has been used, and with a similar spirit, in every succeeding age. The pride of man revolts at the imputation of error, and the passions take fire to revenge the alleged insult. To compose and prevent the strife, "the wisdom of this world" has devised and proposed, that all religious truth should be held as matter of mere *opinion*,—that all religious opinions should be entitled to equal favour,—that the acknowledgement of this title should be called *charity*,—and that this charity should be regarded and inculcated as the essence and sum of religion. Were this compact universally

adopted and carried into effect, the world, it is imagined, would be settled in millennial tranquillity, and men would be left, without molestation, to follow their own opinions, to worship their own gods, and to pass on to their final state in their own chosen ways. All therefore who dissent, are to be regarded as common enemies, uncharitable, illiberal, bigotted fanatics,—men who would turn the world upside down, and against whom *charity* calls for a combination of all classes and persuasions. “The system,” you say, “of excluding from christian fellowship men of upright lives, *on account of their opinions*,—necessarily generates perpetual discord in the church.—Thus the wars of christians will be perpetual. Never will there be peace, until christians agree to differ, and agree to look for the evidences of christian character in the temper and the life:” that is, without regard to faith or disbelief. Pages 31—33.

Such, Sir, is the charity for which you contend, which you represent as incomparably more excellent than faith, and to which you make no ordinary pretensions. But, high as your pretensions are, you are eclipsed in this particular, by deists and atheists, by scoffers and libertines.

You seem to be aware, that the apostles were not entirely in this system. You desire, however, that we may “never forget that the apostles were inspired men, capable of marking out with unerring certainty those who substituted another gospel for the true,” p. 27. In this desire I cordially unite with you. It ought certainly never to be forgotten, that they were inspired men; and as little should it be forgotten, that by excluding from fellowship “those, who substituted another gospel for the true,” they made it as certain as the high authority of inspiration could make it, that those who do reject the true gospel and embrace another, however their tempers and lives may appear, are not *entitled* to the privileges of christian communion. This point then is decisively settled.

But you will say, who can now pretend to inspiration, and who, without this gift, has a right to decide what the true gospel is, and what is another. “Show us their [the apostles] successors and we will cheerfully obey them.” Much is to be found to this effect in all your pamphlets: importing that no

uninspired man can know, nor has a right to decide, what the true doctrines of the gospel are, or what are false doctrines; and charging with an arrogant assumption of "infallibility," those, who profess any assurance or certainty, that, in their articles of faith, or their "opinions," they are right. This indeed seems to be the very basis of your system.

Is it however so, that no uninspired man can know, nor has a right to judge what the true gospel of Christ is? For what purpose then were the apostles and the prophets before them inspired? Was it merely for their own benefit? or at most for theirs, and the benefit of others of their own times? For what purpose then were the revelations which were communicated to them, committed to writing, and transmitted with so much care to succeeding generations? Of what use are the scriptures, if no uninspired man can know with any certainty what are the doctrines contained in them?—The celebrated Hume has asserted, that miracles could be of no use, as attestations to a divine revelation, excepting to such as were eye-witnesses of them; because no other persons could have sufficient evidence of the facts. But I believe that even that gigantick adversary of the gospel never went so far as your argument goes: never undertook to assert that a divine revelation, though well attested, could never make any doctrine or truth certain, excepting to inspired men; because no other persons could ever know with any certainty what doctrines or truths are revealed. Had he lighted upon this discovery, he would have found an argument against revelation, incomparably more available than any which he has urged; an argument which, if correct in its premises, must be decisive in its conclusion: for unquestionably a God of infinite wisdom and goodness would never communicate a revelation to the world, for the instruction and faith of uninspired men, if none but the inspired could understand it, or attain to any certainty in regard to its doctrines. Upon this Unitarian principle, inspiration, to answer its purpose, must be continued throughout all ages; just as Hume contended that miracles must be.

This point demands very particular attention, for it is the very hinge on which the question respecting fellowship turns. Let it then be again distinctly noted, that you have found

yourself compelled to concede, that the inspired apostles did exclude from fellowship those who embraced another gospel, or doctrines or opinions subversive of the gospel of Christ. This establishes the principle decisively, that it would be right to separate from such now, could it only be determined what the gospel of Christ is, and what another gospel. But this, you contend, no uninspired man or body of men has a right to determine. The Unitarian system, as set forth by Mr. Belsham, is clearly opposite, in every essential point, to the orthodox system. Yet no uninspired man has a right to determine, which of these two opposite systems is the true gospel; no one has a right to pronounce either of them false! And, therefore, the believers in either of them have no right to separate from the believers in the other!—If it be really so, then let us hear no more of the great Protestant principle, that *the scriptures are a sufficient rule of faith*; for instead of being a sufficient rule, they are no rule at all. They do not enable or warrant us to decide between two systems, fundamentally and diametrically opposite, which is true, or whether both of them are false. What the gospel of Christ is, no uninspired man can tell. If any undertake to determine, and to pronounce an opposite system another gospel, they are to be regarded as illiberal and uncharitable men, “proud and arrogant” pretenders to “infallibility,” ignorant “bigots,” and odious “persecutors.”

The question respecting fellowship or separation certainly resolves itself into this point. If the scriptures are a sufficient rule of faith, if from them uninspired men can know what the doctrines of Christ are, or what the true gospel is; then they have apostolick, divine authority for withdrawing and withholding fellowship from those, who reject the true, and embrace another gospel. If the scriptures are not a sufficient rule of faith; if no uninspired man can know what the gospel of Christ is; then the “faith of christians is vain, and our preaching also is vain;” and we have yet to wait, in gloomy uncertainty, in dismal darkness, until God in his sovereign goodness shall again bless the world, or some portion of it, with the gift of inspiration.

This cardinal question of the sufficiency of the scriptures ought to be considered, as having been long since decisively settled. It is one of the principal questions which was ardently debated, more than two hundred years ago, between the Protestants and Papists; and it was little to have been expected that, at this time of day, professed Protestants would entrench themselves upon the ground, as Unitarians actually have done,* from which the Papists have been so triumphantly driven. It is however a most striking instance of *the meeting of opposite extremes*. Upon this topick, I can hardly do better, than to present the following quotations from a great champion of the Protestant cause, whose authority on some points you would undoubtedly very highly value.

“I pray tell me,” says Chillingworth, “why cannot Heresies be sufficiently discovered, condemned, and avoided by them which believe scripture to be the rule of faith? If scripture be sufficient to inform us what is the Faith, it must of necessity also be sufficient to teach us what is Heresy; seeing Heresy is nothing but a manifest deviation from, or opposition to the Faith. That which is straight will plainly teach us what is crooked; and one contrary cannot but manifest the other.—Though we pretend not to *certain* means of not erring in interpreting all scripture, particularly such places as are obscure and ambiguous, yet this, methinks, should be no impediment, but that we may have certain means of not erring in and about the sense of those places which are so *plain* and *clear* that they need no interpreters: And in such we say our faith is contained. If you ask me, how I can be *sure* that I know the true meaning of these places? I ask you again, can you be *sure* that you un-

* I am fully aware that the orthodox have been violently charged with a dereliction of this principle, because they make use of creeds; and Unitarians, in opposing creeds, have claimed the honour of “contending for the liberty of being Protestants.” Every well informed person however knows, that the Protestants held the principle, not to the exclusion of creeds drawn from the scriptures, but in opposition to “unwritten tradition” and “papal infallibility.” While they held the scriptures to be the only and sufficient rule of faith, all the Protestant churches had their creeds.—The Unitarian argument, in misapplying the principle, is to this effect: The scriptures are sufficiently full and plain as the rule of faith for all men; therefore no man, or body of men, has a right to say what doctrines the scriptures teach!

derstand what I, or any man else says?—God be thanked that we have sufficient means to be *certain enough of the truth of our faith*. But the privilege of not being in *possibility* of erring, that we challenge not, because we have as little reason as you, to do so; and you have none at all. If you ask, seeing we may possibly err, how can we be *assured we do not*? I ask you again, seeing your eye-sight may deceive you, how can you be *sure* you see the sun when you do see it? Perhaps you may be in a dream, and perhaps you and all the men in the world have been so, when they thought they were awake, and then only awake, when they thought they dreamt.—A pretty sophism this,—that whosoever *possibly may err*, cannot be *certain that he doth not err*. A judge may *possibly err* in judgment; can he therefore never have assurance, that he hath judged right. A traveller may *possibly* mistake his way; must I therefore be doubtful whether I am in the right way from my hall to my chamber.

“Methinks, so subtle a man as you are, should easily apprehend a wide difference between *authority* to do a thing, and *infallibility* in doing it, and again, between a *conditional* infallibility and an absolute. The former, the Doctor, [Potter] together with the Articles of the Church of England, attributeth to the church, nay to particular churches, and I subscribe to his opinion: That is, an *authority* of determining controversies of faith, according to plain and evident scripture, and universal tradition, and *infallibility* while they proceed according to this rule. As, if there should arise an heretick that should call in question Christ’s passion and resurrection, the church had *authority* to decide this controversy, and *infallible* direction how to do it, and to *excommunicate this man*, if he should persist in his error.

“The ground of your error here is, your not distinguishing between *actual certainty* and *absolute infallibility*. Geometricians are not *infallible* in their own science; yet they are very certain of those things which they see demonstrated: and carpenters are not *infallible*, yet *certain* of the straightness of those things which agree with their rule and square. So though the church be not *infallibly* certain that in all her definitions, whereof some are about disputable and ambiguous matters,

she shall proceed according to her rule; yet being *certain* of the infallibility of her rule, and that in this and that thing she doth manifestly proceed according to it; she may be *certain* of the truth of some particular decrees, and yet not be certain that she shall never decree but what is true.

“Protestants, believing scripture to be the word of God, may be *certain* enough of the truth and certainty of it. For what if they say the Catholick Church, much more themselves, may err in some unfundamental points, is it therefore consequent, they can be certain of none such? What if a wiser man than I may mistake some obscure place of Aristotle, may I not therefore, without any *arrogance* or inconsequence conceive myself *certain* that I understand him in some plain places which carry their sense before them?—We pretend not at all to any assurance that we *cannot err*, but only to a sufficient certainty that we *do not err*, but rightly understand those things that are plain, whether fundamental or not fundamental.—I do heartily acknowledge and believe the articles of our faith to be in themselves truths as certain and infallible, as the very common principles of geometry or metaphysics.”*

These pertinent and forcible reasonings and remarks, which were long ago employed against the Papists, are now of equal pertinence and force against the Unitarians; and they now as well explain and vindicate the principles and views of the orthodox, as they then did those of the Protestants.

But you say further, p. 27. “It is also important to recollect the *character* of those men, against whom the apostolick anathema was directed. They were men who *knew distinctly* what the apostles taught, and yet opposed it; and who endeavoured to sow division, and to gain followers in the churches which the apostles had planted. These men, resisting the known instructions of the authorized and inspired teachers of the gospel, and discovering a factious, selfish, mercenary spirit, were justly excluded as unworthy the christian name. But what in common with these men, have the christians whom Dr. Worcester and his friends denounce?

* Chillingworth's Works, Chap. ii, Sec. 127, 145, 152, 160, 162. Chap. iii, Sec. 26, 50.

Do *these* oppose what they *know* to be the doctrine of Christ and his apostles?"

I ask you, sir, *how* those men "*knew distinctly*" what the apostles taught? We have now the writings of the apostles, the same which were then communicated to the churches; but, according to you and your friends, no uninspired man can know distinctly what they teach. Were those, who resisted the *known* instructions of the authorised and inspired teachers of the gospel, themselves inspired men? If not, what right have you to say that they knew what the apostles taught, any better than uninspired men now may know? Will you say that, besides having the writings of the apostles, they had the advantages of hearing the apostles preach and converse? How do you know that such was the fact with all, if it were with some of them? Besides, if the apostles could not write intelligibly, who shall say that they could preach or converse intelligibly? It should seem indeed, that the adversaries of Paul and his doctrine dreaded his writings more than his preaching and conversation. "His letters, said they, are weighty and powerful; but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible."

But further, if those men did know distinctly what the apostles taught, did they however know that the apostles were "*inspired*" men? Is it not on the contrary certain, that of Paul in particular, they denied both the inspiration and apostolick commission? Will you take it upon you to say, that in this they were not honest? Paul himself, while a zealous pharisee, *verily thought*, notwithstanding all "the signs and wonders" which had been exhibited, that he ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. Why then might not those false teachers and others who opposed themselves to Paul, verily think that they ought to oppose him and his doctrine?

If there is any force in what you state upon this point, it lies in this assumption: that those whom the apostles excluded from fellowship, as false christians and hereticks, were guilty of opposing and rejecting doctrines, which they knew to have been delivered under the authority of divine inspiration; and on this account were "*justly* excluded as unworthy

the christian name:" but now there are no such characters, none who reject or oppose what they know to be divinely revealed truth. Here, as in other parts of your writings, you seem to take it for granted, that mankind are much better now, than they were in the days of the apostles. *Then* their depravity was such, that they would deny and resist what they knew to be divine truth; but *now*, no man will do this. What warrant have you for this assumption? What evidence that the heart is not now as "deceitful and desperately wicked" as ever it was? If men could once reject what they knew to be the truth of God, why may they not now?

Is it however certain, that the opposers of Jesus and his apostles, all of them if any, rejected what they knew to be divine truth? On the contrary, is it not evident, that, in most instances at least, though the evidence before them was clear and abundant, yet they found means to make themselves believe, that Jesus and his apostles were not "authorized and inspired teachers," and that the doctrines taught by them were not true. Jesus upon the cross prayed, "Father forgive them, for they know not what they do." Paul testifies that "had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory; and of himself says," that what he did, while "breathing out threatening and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord," he "*did ignorantly in unbelief.*" It was generally so, no doubt, with those who opposed the truth in those ancient days. It is just so now. It will hardly be denied, by any considerate man, that, in christian lands, the advantages for knowing the truth are as great now, as they were in Judea, or in any part of the world, in the days of Christ and his apostles. Where then is the mighty difference between those who now reject the truth, and those by whom it was then rejected. And if such were not then entitled to the privileges of christian fellowship, by what reasoning, or by what sophistry can it be made to appear, that they are now entitled to these privileges.

The apostles, by your own admission, excluded them: and it is not to be forgotten, that they enjoined it also upon the churches to exclude them. Many passages to this effect have already been cited, and many more might be adduced. The

primitive churches, though not composed of inspired men, yet thought themselves warranted to judge of doctrines whether they were true or false; and accordingly, in conformity to apostolick example and direction, withdrew themselves from those who rejected, or essentially corrupted the gospel. Some of them indeed were more faithful in this respect than others; and in his solemn addresses to the churches in Asia, "He who walketh in the midst of the golden candlesticks," particularly commended the more faithful, and severely rebuked the more negligent. And I hold it to be a fact, which ought not to be controverted, that, in all succeeding ages, the purest and best churches, those which have shone as the brightest lights in the world, have been the most steadfast in the apostolick practice,—the most faithful in keeping separate from those, "who would pervert the gospel of Christ."

Yet you say, p. 27, "It is truly wonderful, if excommunication for supposed error be the method of purifying, that the church has been so long and so wofully corrupted. Whatever may have been the deficiencies of christians in other respects, they have certainly discovered no criminal reluctance in applying this instrument of purification." And in this connexion you employ an elegance of imagery, worthy of being applied to a much better purpose, together with a vehemence of reproach, similar to what is often to be met with in the writings of the avowed enemies of christianity. For myself however, I am firmly persuaded that it is to be attributed, not to undue strictness, but to a criminal laxation of discipline, that "the church has been so long and so wofully corrupted." Owing to this laxation, the corrupters of the gospel have found it easy to introduce and intrench themselves within the sacred pale; and seizing upon the gates and fortresses of the holy city, have made themselves strong, have cast down the truth to the ground, have worn out the saints of the Most High, and have practised and prospered, until they have "rendered the records of the christian community as black, as bloody, as revolting to humanity, as the records of empires founded on conquest and guilt."

You contend nevertheless, p. 28, that mistake in judgment is the heaviest charge which one denomination has now a

right to urge against another, and you ask, "Do we find that the apostles ever denounced mistake as 'awful and fatal hostility' to the gospel, that they pronounced anathemas on men, who wished to obey, but who misapprehended their doctrines." It is already, I trust, sufficiently evident, that the nature and general character of mankind are not so different now from what they were in the apostles' days, as you seem to suppose; that there is no such difference between the cases of those professed christians, who then opposed and perverted the gospel, and those who now do the same, as you represent. If mistake in judgment is the heaviest charge, which they justly incur now, it is the heaviest which they justly incurred then.—Do you imagine, Sir, that those whom the apostles "denounced and excluded," made no pretensions to sincerity, no professions of "a wish to obey" the gospel? Do not the apostles testify that the false teachers, on whom "they pronounced anathemas," *transformed themselves into the apostles of Christ?* And is it not abundantly manifest, that they made very lofty pretensions to sincerity and virtue, *and by good words and fair speeches deceived the hearts of the simple?* Even the immediate opposers of Christ, on whom he pronounced his heaviest woes, claimed to have God, even "the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob," for their Father, and in their zeal for God, opposed and rejected his doctrines as blasphemous. There is no evidence to show, nor reason to believe, that the adversaries of the truth were not as sincere, as candid, as virtuous, and as respectable, in the first days of the gospel, as they are in the present age; and might as justly claim exemption from every charge, heavier than that of "mistake in judgment."

This however was not the heaviest charge which was urged against them. To those who claimed to have God for their father, and who were fair and "beautiful" in outward appearance, the mild and benevolent Jesus said, "I know you that ye have not the love of God in you. Ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep. *How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour which cometh from God only?*" And he declared that they had "both seen and hated both him and his Father." All this, you

will please to observe, was said of the pharisees, rabbins, rulers, and priests, those who "devoted themselves to the study of the scriptures," and were regarded by one another, and by the world, as "the eminent, the enlightened, and the good."

I quote these testimonies of the "faithful and true Witness" as a specimen, not to intimate that "fallible men" should rashly apply or use similar language, but to shew in what light He who "knows what is in man," views an obstinate disbelief of the truth. Far from regarding it as mere mistake in judgment, he traces it home to an evil heart. Accordingly he declares in general terms, that "men love darkness rather than light, *because their deeds are evil.*" The inspired Paul also says, "If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost; *in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.*" And he represents natural men as "having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in them, *because of the blindness of their hearts.*" To this evil source, this moral depravity, the scriptures constantly refer disbelief and rejection of the truth. Nor do they at all limit this affecting representation to the early times of the gospel. On the contrary, the spirit of prophecy most abundantly foretold, that errors, proceeding from the same corrupt source, would abound in times then future and distant; and that the last ages of the world would, in this respect, be eminently perilous: that men would "turn away from the truth, not enduring sound doctrine:" and that false doctrines would be propagated in such a manner, by such men, and with such pretensions, as would "deceive, were it possible, the very elect."

And is it not most evident, that all which is proud and haughty, and corrupt, in the nature of fallen mankind, will, in every age, resist the truth of God?—particularly those humbling doctrines which declare, that "the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked," that "except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God," that men can be justified no otherwise, than "freely by the grace of God, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom

God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood;" and those which transcend the comprehension of human reason, the trinity of persons in the Godhead,—the union of the divine with human nature in the person of Christ, and the expiation of the sins of the world, by his one offering of himself. And is it not equally evident, that all that is self-sufficient, and arrogant, and subtile in man, will employ all the resources of "philosophy and vain deceit," to corrupt, to discredit, and to subvert doctrines to which the heart is so decidedly adverse?

Still, however, you strenuously insist, p. 29, "Whatever may be the right of christians as to bearing testimony against *opinions* which they deem injurious, I deny that they have any right to pass a condemning sentence on the *characters* of men whose general deportment is conformed to the gospel of Christ. Both scripture and reason unite in teaching that the best and only standard of character is the life: and he who overlooks the testimony of a good life, and grounds a sentence of condemnation on opinions, about which he as well as his brother may err, violates most flagrantly, the duty of just and candid judgment, and opposes the peaceful and charitable spirit of the gospel."

By the "condemning sentence" of which you here speak, I understand you to mean the sentence of excommunication, or non-communion; and the principal sentiment of the passage, stript of its adventitious circumstances, is, that christians have not a right to exclude any from their fellowship on account of erroneous opinions, or, in other words, on account of their corrupting or denying any doctrines of the gospel. It is, however, an indisputable fact, as has before been shewn, that christians have always, from the days of the apostles to the present, held and exercised this as a right and as a duty. And I ask you, Sir, do not even Unitarians, do not you yourself claim and exercise this right? Is there no case in which you would exclude a man from christian fellowship on account of erroneous opinions? In your remarks on my second letter, p. 19, you say, "We are convinced from laborious research into the scriptures, that the great truth, which is the object of christian belief, and which in the first ages con-

ferred the character of disciples on all who received it, is simply this, that *Jesus is the Christ, or anointed by God to be the light and Saviour of the world.* Whenever this great truth appears to us to be sincerely acknowledged, whenever a man of apparent uprightness declares to us his reception of Jesus in this character, and his corresponding purpose to study and obey his religion, we feel ourselves bound to give him the hand of christian fellowship."—Be it even so. There is then, however, one article of faith, which you hold essential to christian fellowship; an article which you have ascertained by "laborious research." Should one, who denies the great truth that *Jesus is the anointed by God to be the light and Saviour of the world,* request the privileges of fellowship in your church, however fair his character in other respects might be, he could not be admitted. He would be refused simply on account of his *opinion.* And for the same reason, should a member of your church, a man of apparent uprightness, avow his disbelief that *Jesus is the Christ,* if you and your church acted consistently with your declared principle, he would be excluded from your fellowship.

But why should you exclude him? why exclude a man for his error in this one particular? I suppose the plain truth to be this: You would hold that he may be a *good man,* and go to heaven, though he disbelieve that *Jesus is the Christ,** and deny divine revelation altogether. Yet you would say, that he cannot be a *christian,* unless he believe that *Jesus is the Christ, the anointed by God to be the Light and Saviour of the world.* But why not? He may acknowledge, as many infidels have done, that *Jesus Christ* was a man of preeminent excellence of character, and the best moral teacher or philosopher, that ever appeared in the world; may "declare, with apparent uprightness, his corresponding purpose to study and obey his religion;" and may wish to call himself, and to be called a *christian,* for the same reason that the followers of Plato were called Platonists, and others have been called after the names of the philosophers or teachers, whom they have respectively chosen for their masters. Still, however,

* Notwithstanding Jesus has said, "*If ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins.*"

you may say, he denies the church and its ordinances to be of divine institution, and it would be a profanation for him to participate in them? Why so? Though he denies them to be of divine appointment, he nevertheless acknowledges them to be institutions of Jesus Christ, whom he acknowledges as his master; institutions eminently conducive to the improvement of the social virtues and to the good of society; and he is therefore sincerely desirous of participating with other good christians in them.

Why then, I repeat it, should you refuse him? Why after all is it so very important, that he should believe that Jesus is the Christ, the anointed by God?

You will not I presume insist, that the case now supposed is such an one as does not and cannot exist? Are there not many, who stand almost precisely upon this ground? Is it not so with some who are called deists or infidels? Is it not so with those unitarians, in Germany and elsewhere, who deny special divine inspiration altogether,—deny that Jesus is the *Messiah of the Old Testament*,—deny that he was, in any special or proper sense, *anointed by God to be the Light and Saviour of the world*; and yet call themselves christians!

What will you do with these men? If you admit them to christian fellowship, you must give up what, after “laborious research into the scriptures,” you hold to be the single essential article of the christian faith; that which alone “confers the character of disciples on all who receive it.” If you refuse them, you incur the guilt of the heinous crime of excluding from fellowship, on account of *opinion*, or of what you otherwise call, mere mistake in judgment.—If you say you do not “pass a condemning sentence on their *characters*,” I reply, then neither do we on the *characters* of those whom we exclude: and I refer you to what I have said on this topic, in the 24th page of my second letter. You do however pronounce a sentence importing distinctly, that the excluded persons are not christians; for it is upon the very principle, that they deny that article of faith, which alone “confers the character of disciples,” that you exclude them. This is more than, in ordinary cases of withholding or withdrawing fellowship, *we* pronounce.

The difference then between you and us in regard to fellowship, is not that we exclude on account of *opinion*, and you do not; but it is this: you hold it necessary, only that a person believe that *Jesus is the Christ*; we hold it necessary, that he also believe in the *essential doctrines of Christ's religion*. By what authority you make your specified article the only essential article of the christian faith, after some "research into the scriptures," and after perusing with some attention your great authority, Locke, I am still unable to see. Was it for the denial of this article, and this only, that the apostles pronounced their anathemas? Did the false teachers who troubled the churches of Galatia and Corinth, did Hymeneus and Alexander, did those "many antichrists" of whom the apostle John speaks, deny that Jesus was the Christ? No: but they were excluded for errors of a very different kind. What would you think of the man, who should call himself a Platonist, merely because he acknowledges Plato to have been a great philosopher, while at the same time he denies all the essential doctrines of the Platonick system? Please to answer the question; and then apply the answer to the man, who professes to be a christian, merely because he acknowledges Jesus to be the Christ, and yet denies all the essential doctrines of the christian system.

How, after reconsidering the subject, you will decide respecting those, who deny your one essential article, I know not, nor am I greatly concerned to know. At present, however, according to your own account, you have your *creed*, as well as we ours; a short one indeed, as one of your respectable friends has eloquently expressed it, "*contained in one bright line*;" yet a creed which is *exclusive*! Yes, Sir, you yourselves do the very thing, which you so vehemently condemn in us! *You exclude from christian fellowship on account of opinion!*

What then becomes of all your rhetorical declamations, your inflammatory invectives, your violent charges of persecution? They might all be retorted with all their force upon yourselves. Such characters as I have described, by whatever name they may be called, might adopt your own language, and with equal pertinency and modesty, say,

“For” ourselves, we “know not a shadow of pretence for the language of superiority assumed by” Mr. Channing “and his brethren. Are they exempted from the common frailty of our nature? Has God given them superior intelligence? Were they educated under circumstances more favourable to improvement than those whom they condemn? Have they brought to the scriptures more serious, anxious, and unwearyed attention? Or do their lives express a deeper reverence for God? No. They are fallible, imperfect men, possessing no higher means, and no stronger motives for studying the word of God than their” excluded “brethren.” Our “offence is, that we read the scriptures for” ourselves, and derive from them “a different opinion on” one “point,” from that which others have adopted. Mistake of judgment is our pretended crime, and this crime is laid to our charge by men who are liable to mistake as “ourselves,” and who seem to “us” to have fallen into “one” of the grossest errors.* A condemning sentence from such judges carries in it no terror. Sorrow for its uncharitableness, and strong disapprobation of its arrogance, are the principal feelings which it inspires.” Pages 25, 26.

Not only, Sir, do you exclude from christian fellowship, on account of *opinion*, but on account of *opinion* you also pass “a condemning sentence” directly “on the *characters* of men,”—of men too, I think it right to say, “whose general deportment is conformed to the gospel of Christ.” Here, in addition to the passages just quoted, and which were by you

* Trinitarians appear to you and your brethren, you say, “to have fallen into some of the *grossest errors*.” In another place, p. 16, you tell us, that our “*additions* to the simple gospel seem to you at least as exceptionable as the *deficiencies*” of Dr. Priestly and Mr. Belsham. And, p. 22, you say, “I am persuaded, that *at the last day the Trinitarian will be found in a great error*, and were I disposed, I could make as moving an appeal to his fears, as Dr. Worcester can make to ours.” I do not know very well how to reconcile, with these and other similar representations, the following passages: “It is from *deep conviction*, that I have stated *once and again*, that the differences between Unitarians and Trinitarians lie *more in sounds, than in ideas*,” &c. “Trinitarians, indeed, are apt to consider themselves at an immeasurable distance from Unitarians. The reason, I think, is, that they are surrounded with a mist of obscure phraseology. Were this mist dispersed, I believe that they would be surprised at discovering *their proximity to the quarter of the Unitarians*,” &c. Pages 22, 23. One would think that this “mist” might be “dispersed”—“at the last day.”

applied to the orthodox, I must be permitted to present a few more select quotations from your remarks.—“It is truly astonishing, you say, that christians are not more impressed with the unbecoming spirit, the *arrogant* style, of those, who deny the christian character to professed and exemplary followers of Jesus Christ, because they differ in opinion on some of the most subtle and difficult subjects of theology. A stranger, at hearing the language of these *denouncers*, would conclude without a doubt, that they were clothed with *infallibility*, and were appointed to sit in judgment on their brethren. This is the fashionable mode of bearing testimony, and it is a weapon which will always be most successful in the hands of the *proud*, the *positive*, and *overbearing*, who are most impatient of contradiction, and *have least regard to the rights of their brethren*. Persecution is a wrong or injury inflicted for opinions, and surely assaults on character fall under this definition. Some persons seem to think that persecution consists in pursuing error with fire and sword; and that therefore it has ceased to exist, except in distempered imaginations, because no class of christians among us is armed with these terrible weapons. But, no. The form is changed, but the spirit lives. Persecution has given up its halter and faggot, but it *breathes venom from its lips*, and *secretly blasts what it cannot openly destroy*. Of all earthly blessings, an honest reputation is to many of us the most precious; and he who robs us of it is *the most injurious of mankind, and among the worst of persecutors*. *Let not the friends of denunciation attempt to escape from this charge*, by pleading their sense of duty, and their sincere desire to promote the cause of truth. *St. Dominic was equally sincere*, when he built the inquisition. Humble, meek, and affectionate christians are least disposed to make creeds for their brethren, and to denounce those who differ from them. On the contrary, the *impetuous, proud, and enthusiastick, men who cannot or will not weigh the arguments of opponents*, are always most positive and unsparing in denunciation. They take the lead in a system of exclusion. They have no false modesty, no false charity, to shackle their zeal in framing fundamentals for their brethren, and in punishing the obstinate

in error. The consequence is, that creeds are formed which exclude from Christ's church some of his truest followers, which outrage reason as well as revelation. *Such has been the history of the church.*" Pages 25—34.

Such, Sir, is the sort of language, which you employ with such frequency, such ease, and such assurance, as clearly indicate the practice to be habitual with you. I am afraid also that no small portion of your "liberal" friends are so accustomed to similar language and similar feelings, as to have read these passages, and others of the kind in your pamphlets, with no other emotions than those of pleasure and exultation; not suspecting in the least, that the spirit of them is not perfectly "candid," and "liberal," and "charitable," and "mild," and "affectionate," and "modest," and "meek," and "humble."

But is there not here "a condemning sentence passed" directly "on the *characters* of men?"—a sentence of absolute destruction! The characters here described are sentenced as destitute of "modesty" and of "charity;"—as "*the proud,*" "*the impetuous,*" the "*arrogant,*" "*the enthusiastick,*"—as either "not able, or not willing to weigh the arguments of opponents;"—as "most positive and most unsparing of denunciation;"—as "having the least regard to the right of their brethren;"—as "denouncers," possessing "*the spirit of persecution,*" which, though it "has given up its halter and faggot," yet "*breathes VENOM from its lips,* and SECRETLY BLASTS *what it cannot openly destroy,*"—as characters who shall in vain "attempt to escape from the charge" of being "the MOST INJURIOUS OF MANKIND, and among THE WORST OF PERSECUTORS."

Was ever a more "condemning sentence passed on the *characters* of men?" Is it possible for one *more condemning* to be passed on the very worst of men,—the most execrable malignants, and miscreants, that ever troubled the world!

Upon whom is this sentence passed? Not upon the reviewers and the writer of the letters to Mr. Channing only; not upon the orthodox ministers and christians of this country and of the present age only; but upon the great body of the christian church of all nations and of all ages! You "beg,"

indeed, that it "may not be applied indiscriminately to the party called orthodox, among whom," you are pleased savingly to say, "there are multitudes whose humility and charity would revolt from making themselves the standards of christian piety, and from assailing the christian character of their brethren." It does, however, from the very terms of it, apply to all of every nation and age, who have adhered to *creeds*, and refused fellowship on account of *opinions*. Where, among orthodox christians, the "multitudes" are to be found, who do not fall within this description, it would not, I believe, be very easy to point out.

You will not deny that *creeds* were used in the early periods of the church. What is called the Apostles' Creed, if it were not set forth by the apostles themselves, is however historically traced up nearly or quite to the apostolick age, as having been then used in the churches with little or no exception. It is equally certain, that in those purest and brightest days of the church, it was held by all christians right, and a sacred duty, to note as hereticks, and to exclude from fellowship, those who denied or corrupted the essential doctrines of the gospel. Afterwards the Nicene and Athanasian Creeds were used along with the Apostles', generally, and with exclusive effect, in the orthodox churches. In the age of the Reformation, the Protestant churches, Lutheran, Zuinglian, Calvinian, or by whatever name distinguished, all had their creed, and excluded from fellowship those who denied their essential articles. And it has been so with the orthodox churches generally, from that day to the present.

It is also a well attested fact, that, by the great body of christians, from the days of the apostles to the present, the deniers of the Trinity, or of the proper Deity and atonement of Jesus Christ, Unitarians of various names, have been regarded as being eminently subverters of the gospel; and as little doubt has been entertained of the duty of withholding fellowship from them, as from any who have called themselves christians. About two hundred years ago indeed the celebrated Episcopius made it a question, whether they might not, consistently with the gospel, be admitted to the fellowship of orthodox churches. But the question, after ardent,

and powerful debate, on the Continent and in England, was decided in the negative; and in that decision, the orthodox churches, with great unanimity, have ever since rested.

I am then fully warranted in saying, that your condemning sentence applies to the great body of the church of Christ of all ages and nations. Indeed you yourself very explicitly give it this extensive application when you say, with significant emphasis, "*Such has been the history of the church.*" Especially does it apply to those, who, in successive periods, have been the most distinguished in "the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ,"—who have contended with the most holy charity and zeal for the faith once delivered to the saints, by whose labours and sufferings the religion of the gospel has been, instrumentally, maintained and propagated,—of whom the world has not been worthy,—but whose "witness is in heaven and their record on high."—And, my dear Sir, it is with no common feelings of grief, that I find myself compelled to say, that a heavier sentence than yours, against the disciples of the Lord, against "the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth," has never, I believe, been pronounced, by the bitterest of enemies, either pagan or infidel.

But why are the servants of the Most High thus condemned? *Because they have thought it right not to extend christian fellowship to such as have denied and sought to subvert, what they hold to be the essential doctrines of their holy religion; doctrines on which they have founded all their hopes of salvation to themselves and their fellow men, and which they have been ready to seal, and in thousands of instances have actually sealed, with their blood.* Yes, Sir, it is for this **OPINION** of theirs, that you have passed a condemning sentence on their "*characters,*" as "**the MOST INJURIOUS OF MANKIND, THE WORST OF PERSECUTORS, BREATHING VENOM FROM THEIR LIPS, AND SECRETLY BLASTING WHAT THEY COULD NOT OPENLY DESTROY!**" If then, as you say, persecution is a wrong or an injury inflicted for opinions, and assaults on character surely fall under this definition;" I solemnly refer it to your conscience before God, whether you do not stand convicted at your own bar as a *persecutor*.

If you say that the great body of orthodox christians, whom you have thus vehemently condemned, have not only held the obnoxious opinion, but have also expressed it and acted upon it, I shall not deny the charge. But that they have done it in the bitter and violent manner, which you have so frightfully represented, especially in this country, and still more especially “in this quarter of our country,” I do utterly deny; and I challenge you to produce any facts to justify in the least your representation. I affirm, with the most assured confidence, that if in any part, or in any period of the world, a spirit of moderation, forbearance, and kindness, has been shewn towards those who have been regarded as subverters or corrupters of the gospel, it has been in this region, and in the present age. Even you yourself acknowledge, that we “talk to you courteously as friends;” but this, in your charity, you choose to represent as “mockery,” with an insidious intention to “rivet your chains,” and “more irritating than papal bondage.” Of the candour of this representation, I have nothing to say; but have only to remark, that, even in the midst of your violent invectives, you have reluctantly made, at an unguarded moment, an acknowledgement of a fact, known and read of all men: the fact, that instead of the *venom* and “outrage,” which, from the general strain of your declamation, “a stranger” would suppose you had experienced, you have actually been treated by these “most injurious of mankind,” with great courtesy and kindness,—with great tenderness for your *characters*, and care for the preservation of peace. But the “coals of fire which have thus been heaped upon your heads,” have served, it should seem, only to “irritate.”

If, however, the orthodox have expressed their *opinion* respecting fellowship, and acted upon it, is it not also true, that those, from whom they have withheld fellowship, have likewise expressed their erroneous opinions, and acted agreeably to them? Doubtless there have always been men who have thought it prudent to conceal their opinions. Only, however, when their opinions have been avowed, and acted out, have the erroneous, on account of their errors, been excluded. It has been because, that from their opinions, words

have proceeded, which “eat as doth a canker,” and deeds which tend to the subversion of the gospel, that they have been placed out of communion.

But you say, “Both scripture and reason unite in teaching that the best and only standard of *character* is the *life*.” “The whole scriptures teach that he, and he only is a christian, whose *life* is governed by the precepts of the gospel, and that by this standard alone, the profession of this religion should be tried.” “Jesus Christ says, ‘By their *fruits* shall ye know them.’” I have no difficulty in acceding to this statement. I certainly hold, and wish to be understood to hold, that the best and only standard of character, is the life;” that “he, and he only is a christian, whose life is governed by the precepts of the gospel, and that men are to be “known by their fruits.” If, however, you mean, as it is evident you do, that in estimating or determining christian character, a man’s opinions, his faith or his disbelief, are not at all to be taken into the account; I can assure you, I have not so learned Christ.

The scriptures throughout earnestly and authoritatively insist on *faith*, humble, hearty *belief of the truth*, as essential to *christian character*. The christian *life* is a life of *faith*. The *fruits* by which the christian is to be known are the fruits of *faith*. Christians are *believers*. They are *sanctified through the truth*. Their hearts are *purified by faith*. Such is the doctrine of scripture.

If a man discard the gospel altogether, as a cunningly devised fable, however fair and commendable in other respects his *life* may be, you will hardly yourself, I suppose, find in him the *christian character*. If then a man acknowledges the gospel to be from God, and even makes a formal profession of christianity, and yet, instead of believing, loving, steadfastly maintaining, and seeking to promote the great and essential truths of the gospel, disbelieves, hates, opposes, and endeavours to discredit and obstruct them; though he may be eminently what the world calls honest, and benevolent, and amiable, and virtuous; yet must not his christian character be materially and eminently defective? Is it not manifest, that “his life is” not “governed by the precepts of the gos-

pel?"—particularly those leading precepts, which require him to receive the truth in love,—to obey the truth, to walk in the truth,—to do nothing against the truth,—to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints,—to shine as a light in the world, *holding forth the word of life?* These *christian fruits* are certainly wanting in him; and fruits of an opposite kind,—fruits as bitter as the "grapes of Sodom, and the clusters of Gomorrah," are exhibited.—If he be a professed minister of the gospel, and in addition to the particulars now mentioned, instead of speaking the true gospel of Christ, and declaring all the counsel of God, he preach another gospel, or doctrines subversive of the truth, and employ all the advantages of his publick station, and all the influence of his sacred and engaging character, in counteracting the faithful ministers of Christ, representing their steadfast adherence to the truth as bigotry, their earnest defence of the gospel as illiberality, their labours to prevent the spread of the pernicious effects of error, as persecution, their zeal for the honour and cause of Christ, as party spirit, and their measures for advancing his kingdom, and extending his salvation, as projects of ambition;—what must we say or think of his *life?* Is it governed by the precepts of the gospel? "*Beware,*" says He who came down from heaven to guide our feet into the way of peace, "*Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing.—Ye shall know them by their FRUITS.*"

"False teachers would pretend extraordinary endowments of *Learning* perhaps, or *Sanctity*, or *Piety*, and an affectionate concern for the happiness of those whom they should address themselves to. But they might be detected by *their fruits*. For if their doctrine should be found contrary to the doctrine of Christ, that is *conviction* at once, and all their glozing pretences are worth nothing. They are *false* prophets, because their *doctrines* are *false*. What can be a plainer proof of it? Neither is it any objection to this, that our Lord afterwards speaks of *doing the will of his Father*, and of *working iniquity*: for maintaining the *truth*, is *doing God's will*; and corrupting or resisting it, is *working iniquity*. Therefore, let this be included at least among other *bad fruits*, other *works of iniquity*. We will allow that an *heretick* in matters of mere *revelation*, is not so bad a man, generally speaking, as an *heretick* in *morality*; but still he may be a

much worse man, or, to speak plainer, may do a great deal more *mischief* by his *doctrine*, than the *immoral* man may do by his *example*. For besides his propagating *dangerous* errors, subverting souls, it is farther to be considered, that he sets himself up as a *rival* teacher, in opposition to the faithful ministers of Christ. He weakens their hands, frustrates their pious labours, perverts their flocks, gives the common enemy a handle to insult and blaspheme, raises a kind of flame and war in the church, and remotely administers, to all immorality and dissoluteness of manners, by taking off the influence of the best instructions. Religion is not a *personal* thing, which every man may new model or alter for himself. It is the joint patrimony of the whole community; and every man more or less is accountable to his neighbour for any *waste* made in it. That *corrupting* the *faith* is not an *innocent* practice, but a very ill thing, every one knows, or ought to know. I speak not of mere mistakes in judgment, but of *espousing* and *propagating* them; corrupting the faith in important articles, and diffusing such corruptions. A life so spent, is a *wicked life*, if opposing divine truths, undermining the gospel, and subverting souls, be wicked attempts, as they undoubtedly are.”* “Be not deceived, my brethren; those that corrupt families by adultery, shall not inherit the kingdom of God. If therefore they who do this, according to the flesh, have suffered death; how much more shall he die, who by his *wicked doctrine* corrupts the *faith* of God, for which Christ was crucified? He that is thus defiled, shall depart into unquenchable fire, and so also shall he that hearkens to him.”†

The Unitarians, however, according to you, are in no respect wanting in christian character, and have nothing to fear from the judgment of men or of God. We regard other christians,” you say, p. 14, “as brethren, but can in no degree recognize them as superiours in the church of our common Master. We do not dread the censures which they may pass on our honest opinions. We rejoice that we have a higher judge, whose truth it is our labour to learn, obey, and maintain.” Who are these other christians, whom you regard as brethren? Are they the orthodox, whom you have

* Waterland’s Importance of the Doctrine of the Trinity, Chap. v.

† St. Ignatius. Epist. to the Eph. The blessed martyr, it should seem, had “learned,” even so early as the apostolick age, what you say I have learned—to “awaken men’s feelings, by addressing their fears.” He learned it, I suppose, from the apostles themselves, as the apostles had learned it from Christ.

condemned as "the most injurious of mankind," "breathing venom from their lips?" Again, p. 20, "It is not because we exalt reason above scripture, but because we revere the scriptures, that we maintain Unitarian principles."*—P. 25. "It is truly astonishing that christians are not more impressed with the unbecoming spirit, the arrogant style, of those, who deny the christian character to professed *and exemplary followers of Jesus Christ*. P. 28. "Do these oppose what they know to be the doctrine of Christ and his apostles? Do they not revere Jesus Christ and his inspired messengers?" P. 33. "This practice of denouncing—exalts to supremacy in the church, men, who have the least claim to influence. HUMBLE, MEEK, and AFFECTIONATE christians, are least disposed to make creeds for their brethren, and to denounce those who differ from them." Who those arrogant and proud ones are, who, in your estimation, have the least claim to influence, we have before seen. They are the orthodox christians." The "exemplary followers of Jesus Christ, the humble, meek, and affectionate christians, who have the highest claim to influence, and ought to be exalted to supremacy in the church;"† are the Unitarians. "They," you affirm; p. 25, "They are deficient in NONE OF THE QUALIFICATIONS, which were required in the primitive age." Orthodox christians, will readily concede, that they have no pretensions to claims like these. Deeply conscious of many and great "deficiencies," they are far from considering themselves as having "already attained, or being already perfect. "We dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves: but they, measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise."

* In this passage, you allude, as in the connexion, you do repeatedly, to the statement which I made in my Second Letter of the sentiments and practice of Unitarians, respecting the scriptures; and you treat the subject in that sort of evasive and equivocal manner, to which you are egregiously addicted. You do not, you will not, you cannot, deny the correctness of the statement; yet you obliquely, and querulously refer to it, as if it were incorrect, and varying the aspect of it, would seem to deny it.

† In this commonwealth, you, and your "liberal" brethren are already in "the chief seats." To what other "supremacy you would wish to be "exalted," or can well be exalted, until you increase your numbers, or establish a hierarchy, I do not readily see. In other parts of our country, and of the christian world, it must be confessed, it is otherwise. In England, Dr. Priestly, it should seem, ought to have been bishop of St. Asaph's, instead of Dr. Horsley, Mr. Lindsay or Mr. Belsham, bishop of London, instead of Dr. Porteus, Mr. Wakefield, archbishop of Canterbury, instead of Dr. Moore; and the present dignitaries of the establishment, as they "have the least claim to influence," ought to resign their places to the Unitarians,—such, and so many as can be found.

In the latter part of your remarks, pp. 36—42, you present a frightful picture of the consequences, which you imagine must result from what you call “the system of exclusion and separation:” that is, the system of non-communion between orthodox christians and Unitarians. It would have been natural to conclude, from the descriptions which you have given of these two classes respectively, that you could neither have wished, nor thought it possible, that any thing like christian fellowship should subsist between them. How can you indeed wish, how can you think it possible that fellowship should subsist between the humble, meek, affectionate, exemplary followers of Jesus Christ, and the proud, the arrogant, the impetuous, the worst of persecutors, and most injurious of mankind, whose venomous breath secretly blasts what they cannot openly destroy! Can the wolves and the sheep dwell together within the same enclosure, in concord, amity, and peace?

You state, however, that “the system of excluding professed disciples of Christ on account of opinions, is incompatible with the great principles of Congregationalism.” In this, as you cannot but be sensible, you differ most widely from the founders of the Congregational churches, whether we consider as the founders the apostles and primitive ministers of Christ, or the leaders of the Puritans in England and in this country. The apostles certainly established the primitive churches upon this system; and upon this system the leaders of the Puritans, and the churches founded by them, uniformly acted. Look into the platforms of these churches, the Savoy, the Cambridge, and the Saybrook; turn over the ecclesiastical records of the primitive times of New England, and proof will accumulate upon proof. The Congregational churches all had their creeds, their confessions of faith, and all held it as their right and their duty, to withhold and withdraw fellowship from all who denied or corrupted the essential articles.

Yet you say, “This system will shake to the foundation our religious institutions, and destroy many habits and connexions which have had the happiest influence on the religious character of this people. The annual convention of Congregational ministers of Massachusetts, that ancient bond of union must be dissolved. The association of ministers in our different counties must in many cases be broken up.

Neighbouring churches will be mutually estranged. In the same church angry divisions will break forth. Many religious societies will be rent asunder, their ministers dismissed, and religious institutions cease. Discord will be carried not only into churches, but into families. The family altar must fall." Such are the direful consequences on which your feverish imagination broods, and to which it has given the most dismal colourings.

Are you not aware, Sir, that this same sort of objection, or of argument, might have been used with equal force, and actually was used, by the Jews against preaching the gospel and establishing christian churches in Judea,—by the Pagans against propagating christianity in the lands where their gods were worshipped,—and by the Papists against the doctrines of the Reformation, and separation from their church. It is a sort of popular argument, which has always been urged against disturbing the corruptions of the world, by the exhibition and defence of the truth. The awful words of our Lord here force themselves into serious recollection. "Whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven. Think not that I am come to send peace on the earth; I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother. And a man's foes shall be those of his own household."—"Ultimately indeed I shall establish peace in every sense of the word," and "shall make wars to cease in all the world; but at present, and indeed for many years to come, I shall not bring peace, but a sword upon the earth. The promulgation of my religion will be productive of much dissention, cruelty, and persecution, not only to you, but to all those who, for many ages afterwards, shall preach the gospel in purity and truth. The true *cause* of this will be the wickedness, and the ferocious passions of men; but the occasion and the *pretence* for it will be the holy religion, which you are to promulgate. In this sense, and in this only, it is that I may be said to bring a sword upon the earth; but they who *really* bring it, are the open enemies or *pretended* friends of the gospel."—"He that loveth father or mother, more than me, is not worthy of me, and he that loveth son or daughter more than me, is not worthy of me." "That is evidently when the nearest and dearest relations come in competition with our belief in Christ, and obedience to his

commands, our affection for them, and deference to their opinions must give place to love for our Redeemer and attachment to our Maker.*

But why must these dreadful consequences *now* ensue? The "system" from which you say they must result, is not a new one. It has been in practice from the first ages of the gospel. It has been in practice in our churches from the first settlement of our country. The orthodox churches of New-England, of Massachusetts, have always held it right to separate from those who essentially corrupt the gospel; at no period of our history have they supposed that they ought to be in communion with avowed Unitarians; and if at any time they have been in communion with them, it is because those Unitarians have not been publicly avowed and open.

No Sir; we are not introducing or proposing a *new* system.† We stand upon the "foundation" of our fathers;—the venerable founders of our churches, to whom, under God, we are indebted for our "religious institutions," and the inval-

* Matt. x, 33—37. Bishop Porteus's Lecture on the Chapter.

† You say, indeed, that "we are threatened with *new tribunals, or consociations*;" that "it is a melancholy fact, that our long established congregational form of church government is menaced;" and taking your note from the "Layman," you blow the trumpet of alarm with all your might. Were this the proper place, I should feel myself entitled to speak upon this subject with a degree of freedom and confidence. If I have ever made myself known for any thing, I have for my firm adherence to the principles, my zealous attachment to the liberties of our Congregational churches. In defence of them, my pen was early employed; and in the same cause my feeble voice has been raised in ecclesiastical Councils, in the General Association of Massachusetts, and in the Convention of Congregational Ministers. My opinion and feelings upon the subject remain unchanged.

The "Layman" has committed a mistake. He states that "an obsolete manuscript of Dr. Cotton Mather,—is now attempted to be imposed upon the christian churches of this state, as the rule of their government." The truth is, that, by the Report of the Committee of the General Association, to which you and he refer, *that ancient document was entirely set aside*; not a scrap of it was retained; and it was set aside for the very reason, that it contained principles incompatible with the rights and liberties of the churches; principles, which, sooner than attempt to impose them upon the churches, the members of that Committee, some of them at least, would have resisted unto blood. All therefore that the Layman has said on this subject, falls to the ground; and with it, what you have said, as you have followed him both in sentiments and words, also falls.

The plan of Consociation, presented by the Committee, I have considered with earnest attention,—have examined and re-examined with anxious scrutiny; and I am free to declare, that I can see nothing in it repugnant to congregational principles, to the Platform, or to the liberties of the churches. On the contrary it does appear to me well calculated to revive congregationalism in its purity, to restore the Platform to its legitimate use, to guarantee to the churches their rights and liberties, and to secure them from those invasions, infringements, vexations, and usurpations, to which, since the Platform has gone so generally into disuse, they have been continually exposed. I may be in an error. The Report however, agreeably to the *express intention and desire of the Committee*, is before the publick for free consideration and discussion. To denounce it as you have done, is more easy than wise. I sincerely hope it will be examined with all the fairness and candour, together with all the faithful scrutiny, and jealous care, which its nature and importance demand. If you or any other man shall make it appear to be uncongregational in its principles, or dangerous to the liberties of the churches in its provisions, I pledge myself to exert whatever I may possess of talent or of influence, to prevent its adoption.

able blessings which have resulted from them to our beloved commonwealth and country. We adhere to their faith and their worship, to their principles and system of ecclesiastical order and discipline; and both the one and the other we wish to maintain and to perpetuate, in their genuine spirit, and with all their benign and salutary influence, as an inheritance to our children and our children's children. *You*, not *we*, are the *innovaters*,—the aggressors,—the assailants. By *you*, not by *us*, are our religious institutions to be shaken to the foundation," and all those direful consequences, which you have so rhetorically represented, are to be produced! Are you and your friends, Sir, *determined* on all this? It should seem, from the portentous signal which you have given, that such is the fact.—Then, indeed, "the time is come, when" all who venerate the religion of their fathers, who love the gospel of Christ, who wish well to the temporal and eternal interests of their fellow-men, "are called to awake, and to remember their duties to themselves, to posterity, and to the church of Christ." To affect to despise your strength or your means, would not be the part of wisdom. We know very well where your seat is. We know that you have established yourselves on the high places of the Commonwealth; and that you possess advantages for exerting an influence as extensive as it may be destructive. We know too that the earthly dispositions and passions of mankind, and the "imagination and high things which exalt themselves against the knowledge of God," are on your side. And we are not unaware how apt many may be to embrace, with little reflection and as little concern, a fashionable religion which has a shew of wisdom, which makes the offence of the cross to cease, which accommodates itself to the spirit of the world.

Are "the slumbering minds of this community," however, prepared for such a change as you contemplate? Are the churches, the ministers, the people of Massachusetts, prepared to yield up, without a struggle, the consecrated faith and worship, the religious and ecclesiastical principles and institutions of their ancestors? Are they prepared to renounce the religion, and place themselves out of the fellowship of the general Church of Jesus Christ, and to embrace a religion,—an unblest religion,—which has never, in any country, or in any age, been admitted to that holy fellowship? Are they prepared publicly to declare against the Divinity and atone-

ment of HIM, who is "the propitiation for the sins of the world," and in whose name alone there is salvation for men? to "break his bands asunder, and to cast away his cords from them!"—I trust in God that they are not. I trust, that they that are with us, are more than they that are with you; and that the God of our fathers has not yet forsaken the churches, which they planted with so many prayers, and watered with so many tears. It is devoutly hoped that "reflecting laymen," and all the people, will *open* "their eyes to this subject:" a subject which most deeply concerns both their temporal and eternal interests, and than which no other can have a higher claim to their earnest and serious consideration. I deem it by no means too solemn, to refer them to the awful warning of the second Psalm. "*Be wise now therefore, O ye kings: be instructed, ye judges of the earth. KISS THE SON lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way when his wrath is kindled but a little.*"

I ask however again, why *must* those consequences, so baleful to society, to churches, and to families, ensue? If Unitarians are "humble, meek, affectionate christians," it surely should be little expected, that a spirit of discord, and strife, and animosity, and bitterness, and violence would be displayed by them; and little of such a spirit, I sincerely hope and am firmly persuaded, will be displayed by the orthodox, notwithstanding the heavy accusations which you have brought and may continue to bring against them. I repeat what I said in my Second Letter, and I do it with the utmost sincerity and earnestness: "Though we differ and widely differ in our opinions;—though we engage in debate on most important and interesting points;—though we should find occasion even to separate as to christian fellowship; yet there need not be, there ought not to be, and if our tempers were right there would not be, any bitterness, or wrath, or anger, or clamour, or evil speaking on either side. The gospel teaches us to exercise unfailing charity and good will, not only towards those whom we receive to christian fellowship, but towards all men." Wherever then we *can* meet, let us meet with mutual courtesy and kindness; wherever we can cooperate for any good object, let us amicably and heartily cooperate; and where we must part, let us part in the spirit of peace, and with sincere desires and prayers for each other's good. Yours, Rev. and dear Sir, with affection and respect,

Salem, Dec. 1815.

S. WORCESTER.

Are you a Christian or a Calvinist ?

OR

**DO YOU PREFER THE AUTHORITY OF CHRIST TO
THAT OF THE GENEVAN REFORMER ?**

**BOTH THE FORM AND SPIRIT OF THESE QUESTIONS BEING
SUGGESTED BY THE LATE REVIEW OF AMERICAN UNITARI-
ANISM IN THE PANOPLIST, AND BY THE REV. MR.
WORCESTER'S LETTER TO MR. CHANNING.**

TO WHICH ARE ADDED,

SOME STRICTURES ON BOTH THOSE WORKS.

BY A LAYMAN.

BOSTON:

PRINTED AND PUBLISHED BY WELLS AND LILLY

.....
1815.



Are you a Christian or a Calvinist?

I EXPECT the intolerant among the disciples of Calvin will be ready to consign a layman to the fate of "*unregenerate reprobates*," who shall dare to intermeddle with the sacred mysteries of their faith. Their master would never suffer any one to question his doctrines under pain of the fagot. He wished to dethrone the pope only that he might put the tiara on his own head. His disciples in *this* country, and in this alone, retain the same spirit. They would have it believed, that the laity are to adopt their faith from them, as they have taken it from Calvin; and the pains and penalties of infidelity and excommunication are now openly denounced against those, who shall call in question any one of the dogmas uttered two centuries ago by an uninspired priest of Switzerland.

If some future historian of the church shall relate, that in the beginning of the nineteenth century, in a country whose constitutions secure the freedom of religious opinion, and require only a general belief of the christian religion, a set of men combined to write down all who ventured to think for themselves, to raise the cry of heresy against those who preferred the scriptures as the rule of their faith to any human creed, it certainly will be deemed incredible. Posterity will require some collateral evidence of the fact. They will search the records of our historical societies, and the alcoves of our colleges, for any controversial writings

which may confirm so improbable a story. It is with a view to furnishing such a document that I write. I do not mean to enter into the subtleties of a theological controversy, which would be unsuitable to a layman, if he were capable of it. The principal end I propose, is to examine our rights, and to put on record this alarming and injurious, and bold attempt to invade them in such a country, and in such an age. It is one of the facts in the history of human nature, that deserve to be noticed.

There is one point in which all parties are agreed, that the christian religion reposes for its foundation on the sacred scriptures contained in the Old and New Testament. Some difference of opinion arises, to be sure, as to the degree of inspiration which the writers of those books possessed ; but in those books, it is admitted, are contained all the rules of our faith and conduct as christians. These scriptures were originally written either in the Greek or Hebrew languages. They were for nearly fifteen centuries unprinted, and were only preserved by manuscripts or written copies. These copies were scattered over the whole world, from Abyssinia to the remotest north, and from Spain to Hindostan.

No two editions, even of printed books, ever would precisely agree with each other, and of course it could not be possible that these manuscripts, in so many languages, and in countries so separated, should be alike ; and it is only by a comparison and collation of many, that any approximation to the certainty of the purity of the text can be obtained.

The present translation in common use in our churches was made by order of James the first, two centuries ago. Its general fidelity and correctness are admitted, but there must be room for improvement. The knowledge of the Greek and Hebrew languages has become much more generally

diffused than it was when that translation was made. Many critical inquiries have since been made into those languages, and more erudition has been displayed since that period than before. New copies of the Bible have been discovered and collated with the old manuscripts. Some errors and many defects, especially in perspicuity, have been found in the translation now in use. One or two most important interpolations have been discovered, and are admitted to be such by all the learned men of Europe of all sects.

The object of this statement will presently be seen. An honest layman, who has no *esprit du corps*, no fear for the power and influence of his sect or profession ; who considers religion too sober and serious a thing to be the subject of party feelings and spirit, would naturally say upon such a statement, "It is my duty to get, if I can, the very copies of the scriptures that the authors respectively wrote with their own hands, and to learn the languages in which they are written ; and to take as a standard of faith only what I find there written, and not what fallible men have inferred from them." But as he cannot get these originals, and as he may not have time or talents to learn the languages in which they are written, he will take the best translation he can find, and he will naturally infer, that the last one, if executed by learned and pious men, will be the most perfect. As he finds there are faults of great moment in the old translation of the Bible, he will be anxious to attend to and inquire after every improvement. Such ought to be, and such would be, the conduct of every anxious inquirer after truth.

Now let us see what is called orthodoxy in the present enlightened age.

It is contended, that the translation made by order of king James the first, is entitled to the fullest faith. It is regarded by many as inspired, and men are called heretical and wicked, who endeavour to procure a better translation, and desire any alteration in the present English text.

Now what does this involve? Not only, that you believe the apostles inspired, but that every clerk and copyist (whether slave or monk) was also inspired; that even the orthodox men, who made the interpolations to suit their dogmas, were inspired; and that all the bishops and divines who made the translation were inspired. I introduce this point first, because it comes first in order.

The orthodox also maintain, that certain opinions and speculations, not to be found in the scripture, but which Calvin declared he believed were *intended* to be placed there, or *pretended* that *he* discovered in them, and certain other opinions, held by an assembly of Divines in Great Britain, are to be received as the rule of our faith; however impossible we may find it to understand such doctrines, and even if upon the most accurate examination and impartial inquiry we shall be convinced, that no such doctrines are contained in the scriptures.

The real point, and the only point, of difference between those who are called the liberal clergy and the orthodox, rests on this ground.

The orthodox believe in Calvin and the Westminster Assembly; the liberal christians in Christ and his apostles. The former are Calvinists—the latter, Christians. Yet so intolerant and unreasonable are the party who have arrogated to themselves the title of orthodox, that they venture to deny the name and title of christians to the followers of Christ, and apply it exclusively to the followers of Calvin and of human councils, assemblies, and creed-makers.

Let us take as an example the subject, which has been the occasion of the late attack on the followers of Christ.

Jesus Christ himself was an *Unitarian*. To be sure that particular title was unknown in his day. So explicit was his language, that no man dared during his life to ad-

vance a doctrine so derogatory to his God and father, as the plurality of Gods, or the equality of the Son with the Father.

So far as his conduct, his language, his example and his precepts can have any weight in deciding what was his own relative character, and what were his notions of the unity and indivisibility of God, they fully support the proposition, that he was in the simple sense of the word, *an Unitarian*. He uniformly declares, that all his power, all his authority, all his miracles are derived from God. The form of prayer which he enjoined upon his disciples is purely Unitarian ; that is, it is founded on the idea, that there is but one God over all, distinct from himself or any other created being, and that to him, and him alone, are due adoration and praise.

Dr. Worcester asserts, that the doctrine of the trinity is one of those essential points without the belief of which no man can be a christian. Yet Christ himself, who came into the world for the sole purpose of revealing to man the will of God, has studiously concealed from us any such doctrine ; nay, he has led us to believe by repeated and express declarations, that he was in every respect distinct from and inferiour to the God and father who sent him, and whose messenger he declares himself to be. It is then because Dr. Morse and Dr. Worcester know more of the character of God and of our Saviour, than Jesus Christ knew of himself, that we are called upon to believe this incomprehensible doctrine, and to reject and view with abhorrence those venerable pastors, who prefer the authority of Christ to that of these fallible mortals. I premised that I did not intend to enter into the argument upon any of the disputed points. In this I only imitate the Rev. Dr. Worcester and the *charitable* and *polite* editors of the *Panoplist*. It is not because, though a layman, I am entirely unacquainted with the great points of the controversy, but it is because I think,

if, at this day, argument be necessary on this topick, it is the province of learned men, whose professional pursuits have better qualified them for the task. My object is, simply, to shew that the Panoplist and Dr. Worcester have assumed too much, in asserting that the doctrine of the Trinity is a fundamental article in the creed of a Christian.

It would be the greatest reproach to the Deity, to his Son Jesus Christ, and to the gospel which he taught, to suppose, that a doctrine, fundamental and essential to salvation, was not only not directly and plainly enforced in the same perspicuous manner, in which the doctrines of a future state, of charity, of purity of life, are inculcated, but that Christ should have used such a great number of expressions indicating his own inferiority, and the unity of God, which must necessarily lead men astray from an essential truth.

It cannot be denied, that the unity of the supreme God not only is more consonant to enlightened reason, apart from revelation, but that it was the prevailing sentiment of the patriarchs, prophets, and distinguished men, whose lives and opinions are recorded in the Old Testament.

Dr. Worcester insinuates very distinctly, that the doctrine of the gospel, the doctrine taught by our Saviour, the doctrine believed and maintained by many venerable and learned men in Europe and our country; as to the unity of God, is injurious to the character of the supreme Being, is a very different and inferiour sort of religion, from that which Calvin and Athanasius, and Morse and himself hold; and that for this reason, no communion ought to be held with such christians.

Let us examine how far this is true, and which party hold doctrines the most injurious to the supreme Being, and to his Son, whom he sent into the world to enlighten, to reform and to save us.

In the first place, in regard to the supreme Being. Is it more honourable to his character to assert that his power is divided, that there are three coequal beings in the Godhead, who may be opposed in will, in capacity, in power? In what does this differ from the polytheism of the ancients, except in number? We have dethroned the three hundred gods of Greece and Rome, and we substitute in their place three Gods of our own creation.

In the second place, as to our Saviour himself. Is it honourable to him to contradict the doctrines which he taught? In all his language he was solicitous to exalt the Father above himself. "Not my will, but thine be done." Yet in face of this declaration it is asserted, that they were the same persons, or constituted the same God. If they were the same God, how could the will of the Father be done, and the will of the Son be left undone or unaccomplished?

He also repeatedly declares, that the works which he did, and the miracles which he wrought, were not his own works, but those of the Father who sent him.

I know the metaphysical distinction, which was invented in the ages of scholastick philosophy to reconcile this apparent contradiction, that our Saviour had two natures, one divine and the other human, and that all the expressions of this sort which he uses, refer to his human character. But what an idea does it give of the supreme Being, that he should make a revelation to mankind, founded on the nicest metaphysical subtleties, which would be utterly incomprehensible to the greater part of those who were bound to believe them on pain of eternal damnation?

No. The gospel is no such snare. It is an injurious representation of it. The essential points are taught clearly and distinctly. There is one God, over all, the Father and Creator of the universe. He sent his Son

into the world to announce to mankind the most sublime truths, to seal those truths with his blood. But he commanded him to declare and to teach, as he did, that there is but *one God*, the Father and Judge of all the earth, from whom all blessings flow, whose messenger he was, and upon the acceptance and belief of whose doctrines, men would be accepted by God who sent him. Every thing in this representation is more sublime, more honourable to the supreme Being than in the other. But the idea, that the supreme Governour of the universe, in his proper person, took upon himself the human nature, that he suffered upon the cross, that the Godhead was for a time divided, and part of it was on earth suffering persecution and insult from men, and part in the heavens regulating and governing the world, in addition to its incomprehensibilities, is infinitely derogatory to the greatness and majesty, which we are taught to ascribe to the Maker and Governour of the Universe.

It is a curious fact, but no less curious than true, (and it shews the propensity of mankind to accommodate every thing, even the most sublime doctrines, to their own schemes and party passions) that the general tenour of all the scriptures, both of the Old and New Testament, has been overlooked and disregarded, and that particular passages, contradicted by their general tenour, have been made the foundation of a creed, which is utterly opposed to the great scope and object of revelation.

If it were possible to burn all the decrees of councils, so often contradictory, so profane, so wicked, such flagrant proofs of the weakness and perversity of men; if all the metaphysical writers and the authority of assemblies could be annihilated and forgotten; if the scriptures could be delivered to mankind unbiassed by authority; if no establishments existed in any country founded on sectarian principles; it is not to be doubted, that the worship of one true God, the Father

and Governour of the universe, would prevail throughout every country, in which the scriptures were read ; and due and sublime honours would be rendered to his Son who was made the glorious instrument of revealing these truths to mankind. Men would then be as fearful of placing the Son on an equality with the Father, as he himself was. They would be contented to assign him a place at his right hand, as the first and greatest of created beings who had appeared in this world. They would view him as their kind and beneficent Saviour and Mediator, but they would shudder at the thought of enthroning him with the awful but beneficent God, the almighty Maker and Governour of the universe.

We all know the lofty ground, upon which the Calvinists maintain their doctrines, and we equally know the weakness of that foundation. It rests upon what they are pleased to call the authority of councils and assemblies, or as they style it, the uninterrupted opinions of the venerable reformers and of the ancient churches since the reformation. This authority is the same upon which reposes the infallibility of the Romish church. The doctrine of transubstantiation has this same basis, and is not lest plausibly supported by scripture. The points upon which the reformers differed from the ancient church, are not more clearly or satisfactorily proved, than are the opinions upon which the Lardners and Watts's and Paleys have ventured to dissent from the Calvinistick school. But when it is recollected, that till within the last century, faith was settled by ecclesiastical authority, and heresy was punished with flames ; when it is known that to this day, dissent, with respect to the clergy, is followed even in England with expulsion from the church, and to all with many civil disabilities ; and that in our country similar penalties have been inflicted on those who ventured to prefer the gospel to the Assembly's Catechism, or our Saviour as their leader to Calvin, wise laymen, who do not

mingle in theological controversies, will not attribute much weight to the antiquity or prevalence of certain dogmas.

We agree with Dr. Worcester, and we are happy to agree with him in some points, that south of Massachuchetts there is very little freedom of religious opinion. Men must think as they are bid, not as they believe.

Those men in all countries who pursue the clerical profession are generally poor. They rely on the hierarchy or governing party for their patronage and recommendation. In Europe, and even in England, such is the superior splendour of the established churches, so poor and humble, though firm and resolute are the dissenting societies, that it requires something of an apostolical firmness to resist the temptation of conformity.

In our own country, till within fifty years, the same spirit of intolerance had choaked up the channels of free inquiry. But if the scriptures should ever get to be popular, if they should ever attain to a fair equality with the creeds of the Westminster Assembly, and rival in some degree the dogmas of Dr. Morse, and the decisions of Dr. Worcester, we should have very little doubt that Christ would soon become the leader instead of Calvin, and the Bible take the place of the Assembly's Catechism. This day we feel to be distant. We know that there are some determined spirits, that are resolved to stand by their peculiar doctrines, rather than those of the gospel. They are induced to do this, partly because mystery and passion, and their peculiar tenets, recommend them to the common class of hearers. The Sybilline oracles owed a great portion of their authority to their incomprehensibility. The teachers of a doctrine which the hearers do not understand, are supposed by them to have supernatural gifts. This idea is encouraged, and kept up, and we could not notice but with a smile the comparison seen by the Rev. Dr. Worcester, between him-

self and friends, and the early apostles. He and his party, he thinks, are as much entitled to decide authoritatively upon the scriptures, as were the men upon whom the Holy Ghost descended, though they have not the power of confirming the truth of their doctrines by miracles. Hence, that very reverend gentleman treats with much levity and wit Mr. Channing, whose character is truly apostolick, though he pretends to no inspiration.

I shall hereafter notice the unfairness with which the letter of Mr. Channing is treated; but at present I shall confine myself to the point in question, how far an acquiescence in the doctrines of Calvin is a proof of their correctness. It is known that the English divines adopted them, and the thirty-nine articles are partly founded upon them. That church also adopts the Athanasian creed, and still continues it in its formula. There is not a congregation in Massachusetts or Connecticut which would not shudder at its recital, nor is there a clergyman in either state who would dare to repeat it from his desk.

If then all men in this country agree to renounce, as too horrible for utterance, one portion of the orthodox creed sanctified by the usage of many centuries, to what amounts the boasted authority of the Westminster confession of faith?

In Massachusetts, the prevailing opinion is perhaps yet Calvinistick, and so thoroughly have the disciples imbibed the spirit of their master, that they will permit no straggling partizans, no wavering opinions. They must swallow Calvin and all his works as the test of their orthodoxy, or they are denounced as hereticks. Those who doubt, or are even moderate and candid, are damned. The *Panoplist*, alluding to these unhappy victims of moderation and christian feelings, says, "There are others too, who are too *modest* and *unassuming* to preach or act decisively, because for-

sooth they are not *satisfied* about *certain controverted* points. Let such persons abandon the office of teaching and return to their studies till they *are* satisfied."

We have seen insolence in all its forms. We have seen the quintessence of tyranny in the person of the late emperor of France, but never did we meet with an example of such arrogance.

Do the clergy of Massachusetts, Calvinistick or Arminian, Arian or Hopkinsian, mean to encourage *such* sentiments? Can there be a more honest or honourable reason for forbearing to touch controversial points, than that a man is not satisfied about them? The editors of the *Panoplist* virtually recommend to such men who conscientiously have scruples, to quit their livings, abandon their families, and go to Andover (for that must be the meaning) to get indoctrinated.

Suppose a candidate of this school settled with a full conviction of Calvinism, having obtained the certificate (which they are so eager to withhold in case of conscientious scruples) should change his mind, or at least have doubts excited, what is this advice?

"You have had all the learning which Professor Stewart could infuse into you, you have all the grace and goodness and unction which Dr. Morse could communicate, yet inasmuch as you have *doubts*, as you are 'too modest and unassuming' to preach Calvin against Christ and against your own conviction, you must turn your children into the streets, and come back to Andover to be reinstated in orthodoxy?"

Great and benevolent God! Jesus, thou gracious and divine Master! Is this the religion which you intended to inculcate? The *confident* and *assuming*, the immodest and impudent *only* can retain their stations as teachers of your divine religion, but the "modest and unassuming," those who have conscientious scruples about admitting the

jargon of men who have disgraced your name and your religion, are to be discarded from the ministry!

It is not in Massachusetts alone that the works of persecution and intolerance are wrought. The lay part of the community have suffered themselves to be enthralled in every part of the Union. No man has a higher respect for the clergy than we have, but we fear they are undermining their own influence, and giving power to their adversaries by this intolerant conduct towards one another. We shall not allude to the cases which we all have known in *Connecticut*, in which good men were driven away from their flocks, on account of maintaining evangelical doctrines against the creeds and opinions of men.

But this we must state. An orator at one of their publick exercises before commencement, most distinctly recommended the study of the classicks, and urged it on the ground, that they were more sedulously perused in a sister college, (meaning, as we believe, at Cambridge) and that this knowledge was there perverted to the purposes of "*infidelity!*" There is something so unchristianlike in a sentiment of this sort, so utterly unfounded and notoriously false, that it requires all the charity which the gospel enjoins to forgive it.

It is the more unjust, as they knew at that time, that our university had recently sent forth the most learned and able work in defence of christianity, by a young man since elected to a professorship in our college, that America had ever produced.

They knew then, and they know now, that for zeal for the truth and authenticity of the scripture, for respect to the christian religion, and for ardour in its dissemination, the University of Cambridge yields to no seminary in our country.

No. It was a sentiment derogatory to the orator, and equally so to those, who, I am grieved to say, approved it. It was a sentiment arising from an unworthy spirit of rivalry and jealousy, a narrow feeling of religious prejudice. The officers of the college at Cambridge were to be charged with *infidelity*, for not bowing to the authority of the orthodox formula, and yielding obedience to the rescripts of the Calvinistick papacy. Never did a sentiment injurious to any other college, escape from the lips of any student at Cambridge in a publick exercise. We know too well what we owe to our own dignity ; and whatever the emissaries of that, and of other colleges, settled in our state, may do to irritate us and to build up their own seminaries ; however zealously they may work to weaken our institution, and propagate calumnies to render our Alma Mater odious, we shall abstain from recrimination. We confide in the just and equitable feelings of our people, that they will never permit the tongue of slander to alienate their affections from an establishment, which has been the great and best source of blessings to our country, and which was never better administered, nor upon principles more truly christian, than it is at the present moment.

Considering then, that non-conformity to the dogmas of the church has in most ages and in most countries been punished with death, and in all with the loss of publick reward, it would seem to be no very powerful argument in favour of any tenets, that they had been maintained for a great period of years and by very respectable divines.

Even in our own country, the Review in the Panoplist now in question, and the letter of Dr. Worcester, afford pretty strong proofs of the danger of dissenting from prevailing creeds. Our venerated clergymen, to be sure, are not carried to the stake, but they are scourged with thongs of scorpions. These orthodox gentlemen, as if *ex Cathe-*

dra, have issued their bulls of excommunication, and (what I believe the bulls did not usually contain,) all the malignity of caustick wit is exerted to render the excommunicated odious and detestable.

Yes. I will not except Dr. Worcester from this charge, though he flatters himself he has concealed the gall under a cover of honey.

When I read the Review in the Panoplist, I asked myself, what honourable or even honest end do these gentlemen propose to themselves ?

Is it the advancement of God's glory, and the maintenance and spread of truths which they deem important ?

They have certainly a strange way of effecting their design. Is God to be glorified by an exulting, haughty and insolent triumph over brethren who are in error ?

Does the glory of God require, that the most shameful and gross misrepresentations and perversions should be used to excite and prejudice the publick mind against the victims of these holy gentlemen's wrath ?

Upon whom, and in what manner was this Review and Dr. Worcester's voluntary, and, as I shall shew, most unhappy defence of it, intended to operate ?

Are they intended for the benefit of the pretended culprits, the hereticks themselves ? Is it believed that Mr. Channing, and Mr. Thacher, and Dr. Kirkland will be convinced or reformed, or, if they please, frightened, by this denunciation ? Had they so little knowledge of human nature as to think, that detected calumny would not finally rebound to the honour of the calumniated ? Or did they hope to sow discord among their respective parishes ! Did they encourage the malignant expectation, that they should excite distrust among the members of their churches, infuse a little gall where nothing but nectar had flowed, produce bitterness instead of love, lessen the veneration and affection almost

unexampled, which the citizens of Boston entertain, and justly entertain, for their pastors, and diminish their salutary, I had almost said, divine influence, over the lives and morals of their people? Or did they encourage the still prouder thought, that by their eloquence, so *tenderly*, so *fairly*, and so powerfully exerted, they could utterly uproot these gentlemen in the esteem of their friends and flocks, and suddenly convince them, that they had been nurturing in their bosoms a set of hypocrites, of infidels; men who, under the guise and garb of religion, had been secretly undermining their dearest hopes, and blighting the fair fruits of religion in their hearts? Did they hope to make their respective parishioners believe, that Lathrop and Channing, and Lowell and Thacher were men of deceit and artifice, making their religion a mere cloak to serve the cause of infidelity, and that Dr. Morse was the only man in the vicinity true in the "faith once delivered to the saints," and full of charity and good works? I appeal to the feelings of all the persons who have so long known these venerated clergymen, whether they can believe that such was the object of the Panoplist and Dr. Worcester? Do you think, my brethren, they aimed at your conversion and salvation, when they plunged the dagger into the hearts of your pastors and friends?

But perhaps Dr. Worcester will say, "this is declamation and an appeal to the passions," as he has said of Mr. Channing's letter.

And pray, if a man calls you a murderer, or an adulterer, when you are without stain, and does not condescend to reason or argue, what course have you, but to appeal to your known character? and does the gospel or any other code of morals require, that you should be so lukewarm as to appear indifferent to your own reputation? How much more then is zeal, and honest ardour commendable in the

defence of our friends whom we have long known and justly value!! Yes! I am ready to acknowledge that any doctrine which would compel me to believe that Dr. Morse was a saint and Mr. Channing a sinner, that the first was acceptable to God, while the other was the object of his wrath, that the former was the friend of Jesus and the latter his foe, I should for that reason *ALONE reject*. I should do it on just grounds. For I should say, "my reason may be fallible, arguments may deceive me, but experience cannot. I know Mr. Channing to be practically the admirer and follower of Jesus. I am not so well convinced as to his accusers." I know it is a short way of reasoning, but for a layman it is safer than to enter into all the subtleties of the schools. I say therefore, Dr. Morse may be a better Calvinist. He might perhaps contend more zealously, and be more ready to burn Mr. Thacher as his master did Servetus, but I doubt whether he is a better *christian*; that is, I doubt whether he has a greater love for Christ, or is more disposed to obey his precepts.

I will own, that I have derived actual and great light from this Review and Dr. Worcester's letter, as to the respective merits of the Calvinistick and Christian parties.

I find the former intolerant, disposed to slander and backbite their brethren. I find, under colour of great zeal for the cause of religion, they indulge the most malignant passions, passions which our Saviour most explicitly condemned.

I find the whole temper and tone of the Review calculated to shew their triumph over their opponents, whom they thought they had got in their toils.

If all the orthodox have these feelings, if they support and countenance this work and indulge such a spirit, we shall for the future understand what orthodoxy means. We shall understand it to be a sect, violent in its passions,

intolerant in its principles, and utterly regardless of the means by which its purposes are effected. I look upon it, that the good and candid of that party are bound to come out openly, and separate themselves, lest they be confounded with these men who have undertaken officiously to represent them.

One thing is certain, that if the principles and spirit of the Panoplist are to prevail with all whom it professes to represent, a new and more dreadful schism must take place in the church than has disgraced it for many ages, and the cause of religion must suffer, for we never shall abandon, through fear of insult and reproach, men the most venerable for their piety and virtues.

I shall now proceed to make a few remarks upon the Review in the Panoplist, and the letter of the Rev. Samuel Worcester, D. D. I shall consider the last work in the first instance, partly because the author has evidently the best faculty of varnishing over a bad cause, partly because he affects, and I am sorry to say (as it appears to me) *only* affects, a superiour degree of moderation; but chiefly because, in considering his defence of the Panoplist, we shall naturally be led to examine the merits of that work. We shall be mistaken if the honest part of society do not say of Dr. Worcester,

Nec defensoribus istis—tempus eget.

The professed object of Dr. Worcester is, to defend the editors of the Panoplist from the charge of misrepresentation, preferred and urged against them by Mr. Channing.

In common life, that is among laymen, we are very much disposed to abhor cunning and prevarication. We think that a good cause does not require it, and that a bad one is not aided by it. When we see a man adhering to the letter and violating the spirit of any rule, we usually call him a

Jesuit. We say that such a man may be a good special pleader, an adroit pettifogger, but he is not a fair and honourable combatant. In a clergyman such a spirit is considered as peculiarly unworthy. To be sure one religious order, which the general indignation of mankind suppressed in the last century, was accused of this disposition to subterfuge. We should be very much grieved to see the spirit of St. Omer's revived in our country, and especially among those who style themselves pre-eminently the saints.

That Dr. Worcester has attempted to obtain an unworthy triumph over Mr. Channing, on the ground of mere verbal criticism, that he has either misunderstood or misrepresented the general spirit of the Panoplist review, we think will be obvious to all who shall attend to our remarks.

The Panoplist *does* mean to convey the idea, that that portion of the clergy and of liberal christians in our country, who deny the doctrine of the Trinity, are chargeable with all the opinions which Mr. Belsham and the English Unitarians hold. This was the great scope of the work. The whole effort of the Reviewers was directed to fix upon every man in this country, who differed from the Calvinists as to the Unity of the Godhead, all the other peculiar notions and sentiments which Mr. Belsham maintains.

Dr. Worcester resists this charge, by calling upon Mr. Channing to shew any distinct phrase or paragraph, which in itself bears this meaning, and he considers himself as triumphant, because no one sentence taken by itself will bear this construction.

It is well known that the christian world have been from the third century divided on the question of the Trinity. At one time the Arians had the majority throughout all the christian community, and if it had not been for the powerful arguments of fire and fagot, theirs would probably have continued to be the prevailing doctrine of christians. The

Arians denied the doctrine of the Trinity, yet they no more resembled the Socinians in many of their opinions, than the Calvinists do the Hopkinsians, or the Papists either of them. These facts were well known to the editors of the *Panoplist* and to Dr. Worcester, but they knew also that they were unknown to the greater part of laymen. Hence they have both of them, Dr. Worcester full as much as the others, attempted to fix upon all that portion of the clergy, who are not satisfied with the doctrine of the Trinity, all the opinions maintained by Socinus or Mr. Belsham, though they knew the greater part were Arians. I say distinctly, they must have known that these facts were unknown to the great mass of readers, and I am afraid that they were not unwilling that they should be led into error.

The Arians have the most elevated ideas of Jesus Christ. They consider him as a being pre-existent to his appearance on earth; that he came down from heaven. Many of them believe that he had an agency in the formation of this world. In this manner they reconcile some texts of scripture which seem to give to the Messiah this exalted character.

The Socinians on the other hand consider him as an inspired prophet, but purely human in his origin.

There is a third class, whom Dr. Worcester *ought* to have known, because his liberal and pious brother is at the head of them; (a man, who for his ingenuousness and generous sacrifice of himself in the cause of what he believed the truth, is worthy of all praise,) who hold a third opinion; and that is, that our Saviour, though not a part of the Godhead, is veritably the Son of God.

It is not within our scope to discuss the merits of either of these opinions, but we do say, that, knowing these distinctions to exist, it was very little short of culpable unfairness, both in the editors of the *Review* and Dr. Worcester, to affect to confound them.

It is then my design to shew,

Firstly. That the sentiments of Mr. Belsham are in fact imputed so generally, and with such purposed vagueness, to those the orthodox call the liberal party, as to lead all honest laymen, unacquainted with these distinctions (that is, ninety-nine in an hundred) to believe, that all Unitarians agree in all points with Mr. Belsham.

Secondly. That the Review does charge the ministers, who doubt the doctrine of the Trinity, generally, with base and hypocritical concealment of their opinions.

Thirdly. I shall shew, that Dr. Worcester himself is under a great mistake, or has been guilty of a still greater degree of misrepresentation, in regard to the preaching and course of conduct of what he calls the liberal clergy.

I would observe here, before I cite my proofs, that it is as unfair in these gentlemen, to attempt to fix on all Unitarians every opinion which any one of them professes, as it would be to fix on all Trinitarians the doctrines professed by any of them.

Yet Dr. Worcester, by a course of reasoning, if it can be dignified with that name, affects to do this.

He chooses to consider all the Unitarians as *one party*. He must have known it to be otherwise. This was not in of our view decorous in a man of his profession.

In page 10 he says, "if among the liberal *party* such things are done, if *some* do mutilate the New Testament, &c. if of the rest some more and others less directly consent to these things, if as a *party* or as individuals of the *party* they bear no decided testimony against these deeds, and do nothing to purge themselves from the guilt of them, then is it not true to say of the *party* generally that they do these things? and will they not generally with all who adhere to them be held to answer for them at the bar of the righteous Judge?"

God forbid that Dr. Worcester, if such are his sentiments, should ever be promoted to the office of a temporal or spiritual judge. A million of men entertain one opinion in common. Nine hundred and ninety thousand of them hold an opinion perfectly innocent, but ten thousand of them also maintain the most censurable doctrines. The point in which they are agreed is either true or harmless. I would impute, says the humane Dr. Worcester, to the nine hundred and ninety thousand, the detestable doctrines of the ten thousand, which they reprobate equally with the rest of the world.

This is imputation with a vengeance !

Let us, however, test the fairness of this reasoning and the justice of this accusation by an application to them.

So far as it respects this particular point in the nature of God, the christian world are divided into *two* sects only, Trinitarians and Unitarians.

The former term embraces Catholics, Lutherans, Calvinists, and these again are subdivided into fifty sects.

The latter are divided into Arians, Socinians, and many who differ from both.

Now is it not as reasonable to say to a Calvinistick Trinitarian, "Your Trinitarian party (meaning the Catholics) maintain the doctrine of transubstantiation, of absolution, of auricular confession. You are therefore accountable for these opinions."

How unfair would Dr. Worcester deem it, if we should impute to every Trinitarian every absurd opinion maintained by those who agree with him in that doctrine.

Yet on this very flimsy ground, and on this alone, does he impute to Mr. Channing and the other clergy, who hold the simple doctrine of the Unity of the supreme Being, opinions, which *he* considers the most heinous crimes, which in his judgment will condemn them to eternal punishment, and which merit the severest human censure.

I would remark in this place, that although I would here establish the illiberality and misrepresentation of the editors of the Panoplist, it is not because I consider it a reproach to any man, honestly to entertain the opinions of Mr. Belsham. In most of the opinions cited by the Panoplist I agree with that Unitarian divine. In some I differ from him; and however it may please the apostolick Dr. Worcester to denounce such opinions as *guilt*, I shall ask for his commission from my Maker and my Saviour before I shall allow the validity of his decree.

Yes. Though a layman, I understand and value my religious rights, and in my conscience I have believed ever since I have had understanding to discern the truth, that the greater part of the peculiar doctrines of Calvinism are derogatory to God, in direct contradiction to the doctrines taught by our Master; and though I can never call error *guilt*, I shall always esteem the Calvinistick errors the most unfortunate and dishonourable to the christian system, of any which the metaphysical subtlety of men has contrived, or which their pride and party spirit have induced them to maintain. But although I consider it no reproach, yet both Dr. Worcester and I well know, that on many of the points in question, a great portion of the Unitarians of this country differ as much from Mr. Belsham as they do from Dr. Worcester, and in this view the charge was not only unfounded but extremely unfair.

I can easily fancy, that I see these metaphysical dictators of our consciences sneering at a layman, who has the hardihood to give his opinion about doctrines which they will say he does not understand. How can you, Sir, they will say, pretend to decide on some of the most abstruse points in theology, which it costs us the whole labour of our lives to endeavour to comprehend, and even that endeavour is with many of us unsuccessful? Such will be the private,

if it be not the publick language of these inspired teachers. Yet they hold very consistently at the same time, that though we laymen cannot understand the merits of these questions without much study, though it cost the metaphysical and able Dr. Edwards the labour of a life to display them, yet that every illiterate man is bound to believe them on pain of eternal damnation.*

Never was a doctrine so well calculated to keep the minds of men in fetters to ecclesiastical authority. You must believe because it is incredible ; the more incomprehensible, the more certain its divine origin and its truth. "But I do not understand even the *terms* of the proposition." So much the better ; it is a proof the mystery is deeper and more holy, and so much the greater your obligation to believe.

Hence it is, we suppose, that some of these Calvinistick gentlemen hold human research in such contempt, and abandon the pain and labour of study to their industrious opposers, to the seekers after truth, the humble inquirers after the religion which Jesus taught. Hence it is, we suppose, that we sometimes see them so devoted to worldly interests, to the publication of profane books (I use profane in contradistinction to sacred) as to render it impracticable for them to devote any reasonable portion of time to theological research. To such men, to all who are greedy of

* Q. Where are true churchmen to be found ?

A. Only in the true church.

Q. How do you call the true church ?

A. The holy catholick church.

Q. Is there any other true church ?

A. No. As there is but one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, there is but one church.

Q. Are all obliged to be of the true church ?

A. Yes, *no one can be saved out of it.*

The above questions and answers are extracted, not from Dr. Worcester, but from the eighth edition of the general catechism, printed at Dublin, 1811, and revised, enlarged, approved and recommended, not by the editors of the *Panoplist*.—but by the four *Roman Catholick archbishops* of the kingdom of Ireland.

sovereign power over the minds of their people, these Calvinistick doctrines are very convenient. They teach their flocks, that human reason is to be discarded in judging of sacred things, that it was given us only for our every day affairs, but that in things which pertain to our immortal souls, and which affect our eternal happiness, it is an instrument to be dreaded, a faculty to be despised.*

Hence they lay down the Westminster Assembly's confession of faith as the gospel, and by the aid of a few texts, they are enabled to compose what they are pleased to style an evangelical discourse; though its resemblance to the New Testament is perhaps its slightest recommendation.

If a sober, pious, inquiring parishioner should ask them to explain the doctrine of the Trinity, the nature and character and offices of each member of this singular Union, and what was its state when our Saviour was in the tomb and before his resurrection; if they should ask, what Christ could mean by praying to his Father, that the bitter cup of suffering might pass from him, whether he prayed when he knew it was in vain, and whether he prayed to himself who was equally God with the Father; to all these questions the only reply would be, it is a mystery. We know no more about it than you. But if you do not believe it you will be damned, and the editors of the Panoplist and Dr. Worcester will sit in judgment upon you.

The poor man, if his mind is feeble and his spirit very obedient, trembles and obeys; we cannot say *believes*, for belief cannot be affirmed of any thing which is not clearly and fully understood.

Far different and more arduous is the task of those pastors and teachers, who hold their hearers to be reasonable creatures, and that the noblest faculty which God has given

* "When once the doctrine is adopted, that reason is not to be exercised in matters of religion, it becomes almost a point of duty to be as unreasonable as possible."—Christian Observer, May, 1815, p. 276.

to man, is to be employed about the noblest and most sublime subject.

These teachers consider it to be their duty, to give to every man the "reason of the faith" that is in them.

They esteem it a sacred obligation to search the scriptures, to compare all human systems with them, and to adopt these only so far, as after fair and honest and pious research they shall find them supported by the Bible.

Hence these teachers have a much more laborious task, than those who blindly follow Calvin, or any maker of creeds. They would consider it a profanation of the desk to preach doctrines which they themselves could not understand. Their sermons, instead of resembling the treatises of metaphysical divines, are modelled upon that of our Saviour on the mount. They think his example of sufficient authority.

In the beautiful language of Mr. Channing, "we esteem it a solemn duty to disarm instead of exciting the bad passions of our people. We wish to promote among them a spirit of universal charity. We wish to make them condemn their own bad practices rather than the erroneous speculations of their neighbour. We love them too sincerely to imbue them with the spirit of controversy." This is as true as it is christian-like and sublime. We all know that this is their mode of preaching, and these their motives.

I mean now to shew,

1st. That the sentiments of Mr. Belsham are in fact in the Panoplist imputed so generally, and with such purposed vagueness to those whom the orthodox call the liberal party, as to lead all honest laymen, ignorant of the distinction between the various sects, to believe, that all Unitarians agree in all points with Mr. Belsham.

In the first place, I adopt their own course of reasoning, as against themselves. Both the Panoplist and Dr. Wor-

cester contend, that all the Unitarians are to be considered as *one party*, and are responsible for the opinions and even crimes which *any* of the party commit.

In page 6, having quoted at large Mr. Belsham's opinions, the editors of the Panoplist add, "the foregoing quotations are sufficient to give the reader some acquaintance with the religious opinions of leading Unitarians."

The evidence only went to shew the opinion of one Unitarian. The Panoplist cites it as proof of the opinion of more than one of the leading Unitarians. Just below in the same page their courage gains ground, and they proceed without qualification in the work of misrepresentation. "Our readers (say they) will excuse us, if for the sake of making a brief summary of doctrines held *by Unitarians* as exhibited in the preceding extracts, we give the substance of the several articles by way of recapitulation."

"Unitarians hold and teach then, That God," &c. &c. here inserting Mr. Belsham's creed.

This in common acceptation, is an insinuation, that all Unitarians hold those opinions. Here they dropped the word "leading."

The sarcastick, triumphant manner in which the whole subject is introduced, the course of argument adopted, such as that they had *secretly* known, and had often advised the publick of what the Boston ministers had *studiously concealed*, that they were at bottom Unitarians, though they artfully concealed it from their parishes and the world, but that happily for the cause of truth, they had discovered the means of bringing this more than popish plot to light ; all this course of statement, as it is applied to the Boston and other clergy of the liberal party generally, *without any discrimination*, was intended to convey, and does convey to the mind of every reader, that they considered it applicable to all. It was purposely vague, that the suspicion

might fall upon the whole. Mr. Channing has disappointed them. He has proved that a part of what they would impute to him as guilt, he claims as merit, and that the insinuation, the innuendo, that all the liberal clergy hold the opinions of Mr. Belsham, is false.

Do these gentlemen believe, that in order to convict them of a libel, it is necessary they should use a precise form of words? Do they believe, they can make insinuations in language purposely obscure, and when put upon their trial, escape on the ground of literal variation?

What will be said to this phrase?

“Such is the Unitarianism which Mr. Belsham wishes to propagate, and of which he professes to write the history, so far at least as it relates to its progress in this country. Of the existence of *such Unitarianism* in the metropolis of New-England, our readers have been generally well persuaded, but some have not believed that it was making considerable progress, because they could not persuade themselves that men, occupying important places in church and state, and standing high in publick estimation, were capable of concealing their true sentiments.”

I do not know that Dr. Worcester might not attempt to prove that the foregoing sentence did not contain any charge, since he could not see even in the Panoplist a charge of hypocrisy against the Boston clergy, but I understand the above to be an averment, that *such Unitarianism* as Mr. Belsham wished to propagate, and contained in the summary above cited by the Panoplist, was the same with that held by all the men in church and state in Massachusetts, (who were Unitarians at all) and that they concealed, from a sense of guilt and shame, their opinions from the publick.

Such any fair jury would say was the meaning of the sentence. Such Mr. Channing thought it to be, and supposed it included him and his brethren. Such it was intended to

be, as I shall prove, and such Dr. Worcester ought to have supposed to be its meaning.

In the 2d page of the Panoplist Review the term Boston "and its vicinity" is used in such a manner as fairly to bear out Mr. Channing's inference. Nay, it would lead foreigners, and citizens unacquainted with the facts, to consider the whole town and vicinity Unitarians of Mr. Belsham's sort.

So much so, that if any Boston minister, however orthodox, should travel without a passport from the faithful, he would be in danger of being confounded with the hereticks.

"The pamphlet before us (say the editors) furnishes most decisive evidence on the subject of the *state of religion in Boston and the vicinity*. It is evidence which can neither be evaded or resisted by the *liberal party*."

We now introduce one of the passages quoted by Mr. Channing. "We shall feel ourselves (say the Reviewers) warranted hereafter in saying that Unitarianism is the *predominant* religion among the ministers and churches of Boston."

On this sentence the Rev. Dr. Worcester with wonderful shrewdness remarks, 1st. that this does not include the vicinity. But the other one I quoted above, did. 2d. It did not include the "*great body of liberal christians*." But it included the ministers of Boston and their churches; nay, its fair signification is, that the greater part of all the churches were Unitarians, and the sentence I have quoted did include the liberal party. And, 3dly, he says, it does not say that they were Unitarians in "Belsham's sense of the word."

But I have shown above, that in many other passages to the American Unitarians generally are imputed Belsham's opinions; so then, if in any one sentence all the propositions cannot be found, our metaphysical divine cannot find

the assertion supported. To such a mind we can readily forgive any errors founded on metaphysical or scholastic subtleties. There is one other evasion which the Rev. Dr. Worcester invents for the word *predominant*, which I notice for other purposes. He says that it might have meant predominant in "influence," having the "most prominent characters" for supporters. There are two sentences in which this word is used by the Reviewer. The other one is, "We feel entirely warranted in saying, that the predominant religion of the liberal party is decidedly Unitarian in Mr. Belsham's sense of the word." Is there a man of plain sense who believes that the Reviewers meant thence simply to assert that the men of influence, the men who have the care of the college, alone, were Unitarians in Mr. Belsham's sense of the word, or did they mean that it was the prevailing sentiment, the sentiment of the greatest number? Surely the latter is the fair construction; but this construction was introduced, I fear, for the purpose for which, in too many orthodox publications, the same sentiment is inserted, to play off the passions and jealousies of the uninformed classes of citizens against the higher. Gentlemen, you take this course frequently. You are provoked that so vast a proportion of the opulent, well-informed classes of society are scriptural christians, and reject the creeds of the dark ages, the shreds and patches left upon our religion by the first reformers, and you wish to render them objects of jealousy. You may succeed in this game. You have, we well know, the long end of the lever. The multitude will finally govern; but recollect, that in pulling down scriptural christianity, in revenging yourselves upon us for rejecting your authority and preferring that of Christ, you run some hazard of being pulled down yourselves. Some of the best friends, and the most staunch supporters of christianity are among those whom you attack. Infidelity is the prevailing profession of

the statesmen of the south. The populace in times of turbulence soon pass from orthodoxy and fanaticism to incredulity, and you may regret too late, that you alienated the affections of those who were willing and able to aid and sustain you, while you lost your influence with the other classes. I shall say something more on the causes of the late unusual awakening and zeal, and this dreadful apprehension of danger to the church, in the close. I shall suggest some of the true sources of this clamour, and shall render it probable, that if two or three turbulent and intriguing men had not been encouraged, the harmony of the church would not have been interrupted. To return to our question.

The best proof and the conclusive one against the Panoplist editors, is the judgment which they pass on themselves. Their conscience smote them, and it is astonishing to me that Dr. Worcester did not see that his defence was officious. They never mean to deny, and they never can deny, that they imputed to the whole liberal party, in town and out of town, men of influence and men without it, ministers and people, the opinions of Mr. Belsham. In page 27 they say, they are aware they shall be accused of unfairness in imputing to the liberal party "the extravagant opinions of Mr. Belsham." But they justify it. They go on to argue on the honourable nature of Mr. Wells' standing and character, and his consequent authority.

This is a perfect admission, not that they were unfair, but that they *did* so impute the opinions of Mr. Belsham to the liberal party.

Now what have we proved that the Panoplist asserted?

1st. That Mr. Belsham's opinions are those of "leading Unitarians."

2d. That they are the opinions of "Unitarians" without qualification.

3d. That "Unitarians" hold *all the opinions* which the Panoplist selects from Mr. Belsham's creed.

4th. That the Unitarianism which has been secretly spreading in Boston, and of which they had often warned their readers, that which was held by men distinguished in church and state was "such Unitarianism" as Mr. Belsham's.

5th. That Mr. Belsham's book applies to the "state of religion in Boston and its vicinity."

6th. That Unitarianism (which we have shewn they had before defined to be Mr. Belsham's) was the predominant religion of the ministers and churches of Boston.

7th. That the predominant religion of the liberal party is decidedly Unitarian in Mr. Belsham's sense of the word.

And lastly, they implicitly admit, that they did charge the liberal party with holding Mr. Belsham's opinions, and justify it.

Let us now see, whether the whole of Mr. Channing's assertion in his first proposition, and especially the one I advanced, is not supported; viz. that the Panoplist asserts, that the ministers of this town and its vicinity, and the great body of liberal christians, are Unitarians in Mr. Belsham's sense of the word.

Dr. Worcester not only has failed to defend them successfully on this point, but he has most unhappily plunged himself into the same difficulty, by justifying in one line what he denied to exist in a preceding one.

It is where he defends this malicious sentence of the Panoplist, "the liberal party mutilate the New-Testament, reject nearly all the fundamental doctrines of the gospel, and degrade the Saviour to the condition of a fallible, peccable, and ignorant man."

Dr. Worcester first attempts to shew, that it does not mean the whole party; that the whole is sometimes used for

a part, that it was therefore wrong in Mr. Channing to apply it to all of them. He has scarcely finished this piece of fine reasoning, before he proceeds in three long pages to shew, that every one of the party are liable for the deeds of every other one ! That the Reviewers had a right to consider Belsham's opinions as applying to all Unitarians since he spoke in the name of all ; thus the doctor exhibits a new species of reasoning. He denies a fact, supports his denial with much argument, and then proceeds to justify that fact as an acknowledged and admitted one.

The Calvinists certainly will do us a favour by selecting Dr. Worcester as their advocate, but we sincerely rejoice that he is not on our side of the question : we could not stand such a defence, though we fear no attack from any quarter.

The second point is, " Did the Reviewers in the Panoplist charge the clergy or ministers, who doubt the doctrine of the Trinity, with base and hypocritical concealment of their opinions ?"

Here Dr. Worcester is a little more cautious. He deals in general denial, he brings forward but one passage, which I shall examine : But he does make one or two assertions that astonish me. One is, that of all the quotations made by Mr. Channing, he thinks "*he may safely assert there is not one sentence or scrap of a sentence which appears in the letter of Mr. Channing, with the same aspect and bearing as in the Review.*" This charge, if true, goes deeply to the moral character of Mr. Channing ; but it is utterly unfounded.

It will appear to be one of the most singular mistakes or misrepresentations by clerk or layman. It is distressing to be obliged to apply such expressions to a divine, but if a man will fight with poisoned arrows, he must expect to be treated as out of the pale of civilized warfare. The facts

I am now about to state, and the exposition which I am about to present, will be thought to bear still harder on the fairness of Dr. Worcester as a theological combatant.

If that reverend gentleman intended, in the manner of some of the subtleties I have so fully detected above, to justify his assertion by saying, that after these sentences and scraps of sentences were transferred to Mr. Channing's letter, they did not stand in the same typographical order or relation to each other, and to the context in the Panoplist, let him enjoy his triumph, such as it would be. But if he meant, as he did, to convey the idea, that those sentences, and parts of sentences, were not correctly applied by Mr. Channing, I shall prove it to be otherwise.

The "aspect and bearing," and the only "aspect and bearing" which they have in Mr. Channing's letter, are expressed in three short words, "We are accused;" and if we examine the text which was the occasion of introducing this note, we shall find, that the persons to whom Mr. Channing refers as accused, are the ministers of Boston and the vicinity, and others of the liberal party. Now if the ministers of Boston are distinctly accused of all the things stated in the extracts, then the aspect and bearing are the same in Mr. Channing's letter as in the Review, for they are a part of the persons accused, and a part stand for the whole. See Dr. Worcester and the Panoplist *passim*.

We are accused, says Mr. Channing, of the "systematical practice of artifice." In page 2d of the new edition of the Review, there is the paragraph cited below. I shall in every instance give the whole context in order to convict the reverend Dr. the more fully. After asserting that the editors of the Panoplist had long known and often apprized the christian world of this dark secret, Unitarian defection, they say, "But as the work of error was carried on for the most part in *secret*, as many well-meaning people were

led in the dark, and as proselytes were made principally by suppressing truth, rather than by explicitly proposing and defending error, it was a difficult matter so to expose the evil, as to present its character, extent and design in full view, before the eyes of its friends and enemies." [Here follows the clause selected by Mr. Channing.] "It has been an *artifice practised systematically* by a majority of the clergymen who have led the way in this apostasy from the faith of the Protestant churches, and (as we believe we may safely add) in this apostasy from christianity, to inculcate the opinion, that they did not differ materially from their clerical brethren through the country."

Now we ask whether the words, "artifice practised systematically," taken in connexion with the rest of the Panoplist and with the contrast of the word *country*, do not apply to the Boston clergy. Whether they are not as clear as if they had named Lathrop and Channing, and Thacher, and others? There are but two evasions I can think of. One is, that Mr. Channing says, "we are accused of the systematical practice of artifice," and the Review only says, "an *artifice practised systematically*."

To be sure, laymen would call this a quibble, but as it is in character with some other parts of Dr. Worcester's letter, and as it is on such verbal niceties that many of the Calvinistick errors repose, I should not be surprised to see him resort to it.

It may also be said, that the Reviewers do not accuse all the Boston clergy, nor even all who have led the way in this pretended apostasy; neither does Mr. Channing say they did. He only says, "*we* are accused," and surely all the Anti-Trinitarian clergymen are accused, except Dr. Freeman, who is praised, and who *alone* is praised, for his openness.

Case 2d. We are accused, says Mr. Channing, of "hypocritical concealment." In the first place, in page 7, new edition, the Panoplist says, that their readers had long been apprized of the existence of *such* Unitarianism (which I have proved to be Belsham's) in the metropolis of New-England, (this fixes the locality) "but some have not believed (they add) that it was making considerable progress, because they could not persuade themselves that men, occupying important places in church and state, and standing high in publick estimation, were capable of concealing their true sentiments." This is only, I admit, very broad insinuation, but it serves to connect other charges, by shewing that they were designed to apply to the Boston clergy. I dare say the doctor would justify this species of calumny, by saying, that it makes no assertion.

In page 10, the Reviewers say, that Belsham has *SHEWN* us, not that he has merely *asserted* it, "that many of his order in our country would have one religion for the vulgar and another for the wise, that it is a fundamental maxim among the *great body* of leading Unitarians *here* not to expose their sentiments directly to the inspection of the world at large, and to challenge investigation, but to operate in secret."

I introduce this to shew the same general design, and also that the charge is made against the whole body.

All these extracts are produced as introductory to the following in page 11, speaking of the society in Tremont street (King's chapel.) We must say (say the Reviewers) that the conduct of this society and of their minister, in coming out openly and avowing their sentiments to the world, is vastly preferable to an *hypocritical concealment of them*.

This is a slander by innuendo. It means that other societies did hypocritically conceal. But the Rev. Dr. Wor-

cester triumphs here. He says, there is not a direct charge. He quotes it as far as I have now done ; but who will ever believe without consulting the book, that this divine, who charges his brother Channing with mutilation, took this extract and left the words which immediately follow ? “ Had *other societies* followed their example, we should long since have known with whom we were contending, and not have been obliged to guard against ambushes instead of combatting in the open field.” Which those other societies were, is made known by the above extracts from pages 7 and 10, and from the whole tenour of the Review. The other societies in Boston, who are not Trinitarian in their sentiments, are then charged with “ hypocritical concealment,” and *a fortiori* their pastors are so charged, who are more than ten times distinctly noticed in the Review.

Case 3d. We are accused of “ cowardice in the concealment of our opinions,” “ of cunning and dishonesty,” “ of acting in a base hypocritical manner, a manner at which common honesty revolts ;” “ a manner incompatible with fidelity and integrity.”

I put all these distinct cases together, because they are supported by the same evidence.

Speaking of Mr. Wells’s letter, page 20, the Reviewers say, that his apology for his cautious brethren, sufficiently indicates his views of their conduct in regard to their *public teaching*. This shews of whom they considered him to be speaking, that they were ministers, publick teachers. They then proceed, “ Thus it is, and thus it has been for years. Knowing that the cold skepticism of Socinianism cannot satisfy the wants nor alleviate the woes of plain *common sense* people, its advocates in general have not *dared* to be open, (here is the cowardice.) They have clandestinely crept into orthodox churches by forbearing to contradict their faith, (this shews who are intended—that it

is the clergy) and then gradually moulded them by their NEGATIVE preaching, to the shape they would wish." In the same paragraph and in the same allusion, again, " Who does not see that there is great *cunning*, and that there is great policy in all this. [Here the charge of cunning is advanced.] " But then, the honesty ! That is another matter. Did the holy apostles act in this manner when they preached to Jews and heathens ? Did they teach by negatives ? [This shews they mean the persons above referred to.] Let those blush, who profess to follow the apostles, and yet behave in this base, hypocritical manner. Common honesty revolts at it. The idea, that a *minister* believes the truths of the gospel to be of infinite importance, and still conceals them, is incompatible either with fidelity or integrity."

It makes one blush, to feel obliged to prove so self-evident a proposition, as that these charges were made against Mr. Channing and the Boston clergy. It makes us blush still deeper, to find any persons with the christian name capable of writing such language ; and we shudder when we perceive that any man could affect to doubt their intended application.

But if Dr. Worcester had confined himself simply to a denial of the charge, if he had even gone no farther than to charge Mr. Channing with false and unfair quotations, he would not have sunk so much in our esteem. But there is an affectation of fairness, and of sentiment, and tenderness, which doubles his condemnation. He says, that when he read these extracts in Mr. Channing's letter, he was excited in regard to the Reviewer, [meaning that he felt angry] and he was surprised, that he had not felt the same excitement when he first read them in the Review. This is a stroke of art, first, to make the reader believe his candour, and that he should have felt very indignant at such charges ;

secondly, To heighten the belief, that the passages in their natural connexion bore no such meaning.

Now what shall we say, when we see that they have the same aspect and bearing in the Review, as Mr. Channing stated them to have?—That his assertion was strictly, literally, and technically true, true in the most rigid construction of law and language, true to learned and true to vulgar apprehension in the hidden and the obvious meaning?

But this is not the worst of the case for Dr. Worcester. He stands self-accused. By saying, that he felt excited, or angry, at the accusations of the Panoplist as stated by Mr. Channing, he implicitly admits them to be calumnies, reasonable causes of offence; and yet this very consistent defender, who felt abhorrent at such suggestions, and denies that the Panoplist made those charges, in the aspect and bearing stated by Mr. Channing, advances in substance the *same charges*, and seems astonished that Mr. Channing should have felt indignant at them. Let us furnish our proofs.

In page 17 he attempts to shew, that the same charges of hypocritical concealment are true, he first cites the authority of Mr. Freeman, Mr. Wells, and Mr. Belsham, and then adds, “you must be apprised that the opinion [that they concealed their sentiments, and *temporized*] was very extensively prevalent, prevalent not only among your adversaries, but also among your friends. Hundreds and hundreds of times have I heard it from various quarters, and never have I heard, as I recollect, the truth of it denied or called in question.”

Again. “I did suppose, that you and your liberal brethren held it as a maxim, that a degree of reserve and concealment, greater or less according to circumstances, was prudent, and justifiable, and praiseworthy.”

And pray, if Dr. Worcester believed all this of them, if he really thought them hypocrites and afraid to avow their opinions, why was he *excited* against the Panoplist, when he saw the charges collected by Mr. Channing?

Will he say, that he did not look upon concealment as any offence, or any breach of duty? He goes on to describe this failure of openness to be the greatest degree of infidelity to God and Christ.

I shall now say a word or two on the third proposition, that the Rev. Dr. Worcester has either mistaken or misrepresented the course of preaching, which Mr. Channing stated, and most clearly stated, to be that of himself and friends. Dr. Worcester, in page 22, chooses to understand Mr. Channing as saying, that he did not introduce *any* great controversial points into his discourses.

Mr. Channing's words, cited at length, and not garbled and mutilated, have a very different "aspect and bearing." "As to that very small part of our hearers, says he, who are attached to the doctrine of the Trinity, while we have not wished to conceal from them our difference of opinion, we have been fully satisfied, that the most effectual method of promoting their holiness and salvation, was to urge on them those *great truths* and *precepts* about which there is little contention, and which have an immediate bearing on the temper and life."

A more delightful and rational rule could not, one would think, be adopted.

What is Dr. Worcester's course as to this sentence? He says, there has been great contention about *all* the great truths of christianity, and therefore against the positive declaration of Mr. Channing, that he does urge certain great truths of the gospel, Dr. Worcester makes the following enumeration. "The doctrines concerning the Saviour's person and character, his priesthood and atonement, his

offices and work; the doctrines concerning the moral state of mankind, regeneration by the holy spirit, justification by faith, pardon and eternal salvation through the merits of the one Mediator, the resurrection of the body, and the final judgment, "the everlasting destruction of those that obey not the gospel," are subjects of continual and earnest contention among those who profess themselves christians. *These doctrines then, according to your own representation, you and your liberal brethren refrain from bringing into discussion before your hearers."*

This is the last and worst quotation I shall make from Dr. Worcester. He affects to believe, that Mr. Channing admitted, that he never preached concerning the person, character and works of our Saviour, nor the moral state of mankind, nor the doctrines of pardon, nor eternal salvation, nor the resurrection, nor the final judgment!!!

Did he believe it to be so? Even charity can scarcely admit it. Such a course of argument would merit a fine or degradation in a Sophomore, but in a minister of Christ, what are we to say of it? Is it to be understood, that the orthodox clergy generally approve of measures, at which all men of sentiment revolt?

I can only say, that if any religion or any doctrines permit or allow of such proceedings, it is a sufficient reason for rejecting them.

Our disposition to fairness induces us to say, that we have no doubt that the Rev. Dr. Worcester had, in the passage to which we refer, a mental reservation, which entirely reconciled this representation of Mr. Channing's preaching to his own conscience. It is however melancholy to reflect, that theological controvertists often have recourse to measures, which appear to laymen who consider a God of truth as an enemy to subterfuge, very improper. The doctor will doubtless say, "have

there not been violent contentions as to the "nature, " extent, and degree of future punishments, and the time "and manner of final judgment? Had I not a meta- " physical and abstract right then to say, though I did not " believe, that Mr. Channing omitted these points?" I answer without hesitation. No, Sir, you had no right to make an inference which you did not believe to be true. Neither you, nor any man in christendom could believe, that the Boston clergy omit to urge on their hearers the doctrines of final judgment, and punishment. You might presume from what Mr. Channing said, that they did not enter on this doctrine of purgatory, and the specifick nature, extent and duration of punishments at the last day, but neither you nor any one of your brethren, ever believed that they refrained from teaching their hearers, that there would be a day of final judgment, in which men would receive a sentence according to their deeds.

If the liberal clergy have not arrayed the Deity in all the terrors which suit the gloomy imaginations of some men, they have not been wanting in representing him as a just being, delighting in the virtue of his creatures, and justly offended with their vices, and that his rewards and punishments would be proportional to their conduct in this life. God grant, that at that solemn day, all those who have been so forward in censuring others may be able to render as good an account of their stewardship, as those whom they have rashly accused.

I have now completed the design which I had originally in view; which was, to place in *alto relievo*, in a prominent light, the calumnies of the editors of the Panoplist. I am not certain that those gentlemen will not thank us, for proving their true meaning and design against the defence of Dr. Worcester.

I shall make a few remarks on various miscellaneous heads, all connected with this grand bill of presentment, which the exclusive saints have made against the great body of hereticks, called liberal christians, before that venerable tribunal, the mob, in a language and temper just suited to their court.

THE MOTIVE FOR THIS ATTACK OF THE PANOPLIST,
AND ITS CONSISTENCY.

That in a free country every man has a right to address the people on any topick, which he may think useful, cannot be questioned. He has a strict legal right also to manifest in himself a most diabolical, revengeful temper, and he can escape punishment, if he will make his accusations so vague, as that no individual can prove himself distinctly charged with a moral or legal offence. As in our country it is no crime and scarcely a disgrace, to entertain opinions on religious subjects differing from the majority, so there is no remedy, when any malicious writer shall under cover of the press, charge persons with opinions which they do not profess, or misrepresent and mistake those which they do. But though such slanderers can escape what they deserve, without question, judicial punishment, yet there are tribunals of a higher kind, both human and divine, which they never will escape.

There is a moral court, erected in the breasts of all men of common honesty, to which they are answerable. To this court I appeal, in behalf of those venerated men, who have been shamefully abused.

What authority has Dr. Morse, or Dr. Worcester, or Mr. Evarts, or any body else, over Mr. Channing, and Mr. Thacher, and Mr. Lowell, and their parishioners? Is there any ecclesiastical power in our State confided to them, when both pastor and people agree? We know there is not. But

it is urged, that on so solemn a subject the duty of apostles is paramount to human laws, and that St. Morse, St. Evarts, and St. Worcester, reinvested with the power of the Holy Spirit, which descended on St. Paul and St. Peter, are bound to mount the apostolick chair and excommunicate the hereticks. Grant it. It may soon be too dangerous to deny the authority of these apostles. But it must be admitted, that the glory of God and the advancement of true religion *ought* to be not only the motive, but the end proposed.

It appears to me then that the editors of the Panoplist Review most apparently had neither.

In the first place, its temper is so bitter, so full of sarcasm and levity, that it could not have proceeded from a pure desire to promote the cause of Christ.

In the second place, it was inconsistent; for if these Anti-Trinitarian clergymen had been so ashamed or afraid of their opinions, as to conceal them studiously from their parishes, as the Panoplist contends, the doctrines could spread but very slowly, and it was a proof, that those who held them were not eager to make proselytes.

It seems to shew at least, what Mr. Channing asserts, that though their researches led them to reject the Calvinistick doctrine, they did not think it necessary to direct their publick instructions against these specifick errors; as not involving questions essential, however important. Now to attack these gentlemen, who, as the Reviewers allege, studiously concealed their opinions; to attempt to create a popular impression, that their forbearance on these controverted points is a heinous crime, and thus lay men of their learning and talents under the necessity of defending their alleged heresy, and shewing it to be the real gospel, could not fail to extend the opinions, which, according to these accusers of the brethren, ought to be reprobated and

dreaded; and it shews, that every thing but truth was the object those zealots for orthodoxy.

The gentlemen of this school talk much about their *openness*. They would have it believed, that they are as much more disinterested and honest in religion, than the class of temperate theologians, as they are more forward, and dogmatical, and denouncing. This is claiming too much in all reason, considering how many interested and natural, if not criminal feelings, may be gratified by this vaunted openness. I have no doubt, there are in the ranks of the party, persons of amiable or timid character, whom it costs some struggle with their disposition, and perhaps their conviction, to dogmatize and rail at the bitter rate demanded by the leaders and whippers in of the sect. But with respect to others, especially of the prominent sort, the sacrifice would be in *suppressing*, rather than in publishing their peculiar creed. Shall partisans and champions of a creed and sect, who claim exclusive possession of the truth, who think the distinctions between themselves and others essential, who are able to avenge themselves in this world on those who dissent from them, by holding them forth to the multitude, and fixing the brand of heresy upon them, and who profess to expect to be avenged by the final Judge at the last day, think much of raising their standard, and boast of their *openness*? Having a majority in numbers at least with them, deriving consideration and influence, places in publick seminaries, and pulpits, from their sectarian peculiarities, it does not seem to require any great portion of the spirit of martyrdom to proclaim their faith most loudly.

A SMALL BLUNDER OF THE PANOPLIST.

The truth will sometimes force its way through lips the least disposed to its utterance. Take for example this unfortunate sentence of the Panoplist.

Speaking of the Anti-Trinitarian, or scriptural clergy, who, as they pretend, have gradually by "*negative preaching*," (I use their very words) moulded their people to the shape they would wish," [a pretty singular mode, it must be admitted, of moulding men's minds by negative preaching,]

They add,

"The people after a while, (by the means of this negative preaching, which means *silence* as you will see) *never* hearing of atonement, nor of special grace, or the kindred doctrines, forget that they belong to the christian system, and by and by regard as a kind of *enthusiast or monster* a man who preaches these doctrines." These are the very words in their true bearing.

Is this the Panoplist? Do my eyes deceive me? Your enemies never said any thing so bad of those doctrines. "The liberal clergy creep silently into orthodox churches, preach negatively (that is, are silent) on certain controverted points, the good seed is soon lost, and simply by *not hearing* these doctrines, for some time, (that is, "after a while") when they hear them anew they are shocked at them, and consider the man who utters them a monster!!!"

God forbid that your doctrines should be so bad, gentlemen. God forbid that you should denounce such men as Channing, for disbelieving doctrines, which, you say, even orthodox churches, after a short interruption, receive with horror and disgust.

I do not cite this as affording a triumph. It is a noble sentiment and true. It is a generous and ingenuous confession.

I declare to you, honestly, as a layman, there is nothing, as you justly observe, that so soon bristles my hair with horror as some of the doctrines maintained by the orthodox.

THE REMARK OF THE PANOPLIST, SO TRULY APOSTOLICK,
THAT THE "UNITARIANS PRAISE ONE ANOTHER."

I do not wonder that they are so partial to this sally of wit, it has all the qualities of this production of Attica, except brevity. It is so rare a quality too among the orthodox ! and it is so precisely suited to the solemnity and awful nature of such a subject !

I was convinced, last summer, when the same writer caught this idea, and run it down through several octavo pages, that he valued it too much to let it sink into oblivion. I had no doubt, that, like the murdered Starrett, it would "re-appear." I am not mistaken ; and much as I pity the temper of the editors of the Panoplist, I have yet so much of a christian spirit, that I would not willingly deprive them of the pleasure of repeating this truly Attick jest every year, if I did not owe something to truth.

It is admitted, that certain men who agree in denying the truth or the importance of a particular dogma, and in the excellence of a catholick spirit, do praise one another.

To make this a reproach, (and if it is not a reproach it should not have been introduced, for it cannot be believed that on so solemn a question, as that of the Unity of the supreme God, orthodox men would indulge in ridicule and levity, and wit,) if it be a serious reproach, it should have been accompanied with the proof, that the persons charged denied this praise to others, or that those who were praised, were undeserving of it.

I do not see that any due praise is withheld from the orthodox party. I presume they do not expect us to allow that the superiour *learning*, or *fairness*, or *candour* of some, whom they put forward, is the ground of their selection. Full credit is given by us to the learning and character of the Calvinists. They do not, I conceive, insist,

that their peculiar sentiments shall be acknowledged as the result of their pre-eminent spirit of research; or acquaintance with sacred literature ; neither can we feel obliged to consider their intolerance and censoriousness the effect of their piety and benevolence. I think it quite enough in favour of the best of those persons, who promote division, and awaken hateful passions against honest men for being honest, and preferring the Bible to a formula, to allow their anathematizing spirit to be *consistent* with virtue, but not to be a *part* of it. With regard to others, they cannot claim more charity than they give.

As to learning, we do not deny the metaphysical powers of Edwards and Hopkins, and the ingenuity of Dr. Emmons ; and do not dispute the reputed or known abilities of the Andover professors—but that critical learning, which is applicable to the interpretation of the scriptures, and that literature, which serves to illustrate and adorn religious and moral truth, as is well known, has been in very little repute among the high Calvinists in this part of the country. A regard to the credit and influence of the sect, and the effect of their institution, is doubtless causing a change in this respect, and will probably cause an abatement of their bigotry. On the other hand, will it be denied that the praise bestowed on the Unitarians is well deserved ? Will any man question the personal virtue of such men as Lathrop, Channing, Thacher, and the great body of the liberal clergy ?

Our country is too much given to self-commendation I admit. But when the orthodox shall produce such works as the writings of Belknap, or the sermons of Clarke, and Buckminster, and Freeman, and so much learning as is found in Everett's answer to English, we will admit that they are as much entitled to praise. At present we cannot compare Morse's Geographical works, or his sermons, such

as we have seen of them, or even Dr. Worcester's letter, with those respectable productions of our country.

But as to this habit of praising one another, you are extremely disingenuous in not feeling and acknowledging the motive. It is to bear up these victims of your vengeance against your slanders, that such things are said. You are the majority. With all the insolence of conscious strength, and with the malignity of enemies, you are assailing, not their opinions and christian standing only, but their probity in the discharge of their function; and when a friend is induced by your calumnies to speak of them with respect, you call it praise.

How consistent is this course in men, who arrogate to themselves *en masse* all the christianity and all the virtue in the country!! How consistent in men, who sometimes promote to offices of the highest honour those whom they themselves despise, and whom the publick have long since condemned. Let us then hear no more on the subject of the self praise of the Unitarians, until you are prepared to shew that it is ill-deserved. I can see no reason why I should not praise a learned man, because he happens to agree with me, in a doctrine, upon which men of sense, in all ages, where there was freedom of opinion, have been *found prone to agree*.

HARVARD COLLEGE.

A large proportion of the Review in the Panoplist is devoted to an attempt to render odious the officers of this institution, and to withdraw from it the confidence of the publick. Aware, however, of the hold it has upon the affections of the people, they have thought it necessary to profess a regard for it.

This is, in truth, rather suspicious. The reputed editors of the Panoplist, and authors of the Review, are Alumni of

other colleges, and one or more of them sent into this state, for the purpose of punishing and pursuing the college for refusing to become sectarian. It is remarkable, that almost all the sons of our Alma Mater should be so outdone in filial respect and tenderness by these strangers, whom she never knew ! This *foreign patriotism*, however popular in our country, is attended with some inconveniences. I wish these volunteers in supplying the defects of our mother's own children, had a little different way of shewing their regard. They love her so well, that if she will only give herself up to their views, and cease to consider the peculiar dogmas of their creed as subjects of inquiry and discussion, but will declare them to be first principles, and suffer no liberty upon these points to any of her officers, they will admit, that she is as great a blessing to the publick, as she was in good old times ! These generous keepers of their neighbour's vineyard would have it thought, that there is a great change in the theological character of the college, that is, of its superintendents and officers, within the last twenty years. Every one knows, that for sixty years, at least, this institution has been distinguished as the temperate region of theology ; that the five points, and other points of violent theorists and zealots for orthodoxy, have never been inculcated, and that the Calvinists and Hopkinsians have always considered Harvard College as a place, where a man, instructor or pupil, might refuse to wear their badges without any forfeiture of reputation or influence.

The Panoplist editors and Reviewers admit, that the college has been, in many points of view, the pride and glory of our western world. Its excellent benefactors they allow to have been pious men, and they agree, that it has been the nursery of a long and illustrious train of civil and religious characters. But they omit to state, that the liberal Hollises are amongst its benefactors ; that Mr. Adams, the

president of the United States, and Gore, and Parsons, and Ames, and a multitude of others, who are its present, or have been its late supporters, are ranked in the class of liberal christians. They omit to state, that Clarke, and Belknap, and Osgood, and Porter, and Kirkland, and Channing, and Buckminster, and Thacher, and Norton, and Everett, and others are among its pupils, who have been more distinguished than almost any who preceded them.

They say, we shall resort to a clamour, that the interests of learning are in danger. We shall take no such course. We say that all the charges against our Alma Mater are false. That true religion, pure and unadulterated christianity, is the great object of her pursuit. She maintains, that christianity can be well understood and firmly supported only by diligent, and fair, and impartial inquiry.

The college was originally devoted to "Christ and the church," and at no period of its history did the Christian religion engage there so large a proportion of academick instruction.

At the present day, the study of the christian religion forms the most prominent part. There is, however, no attempt to disseminate Unitarian or any other sectarian principles. The minds of the youth are left to the operation of free inquiry. The books which are taught, Butler, and Paley, and Grotius, are the works of men eminent for their piety, and read and approved in orthodox seminaries.

The Reviewers speak of the munificent founders of *ancient* times. The whole records of the University cannot furnish an example of such a donation, as the late noble endowment for a professorship of Greek; one of the main objects of which is to aid in the critical examination of the *holy* scriptures.

The donation of the Hon. Mr. Dexter, a man of enlightened mind, and pious affections, for the promotion of the study of Biblical criticism, is also almost unexampled in past times. Of the same character, and meriting equal applause, is the donation of Mr. Parkman for a foundation of a new theological professorship.

The gossiping tales, about the prayers on publick occasions, are worthy of the cause which they are introduced to sustain. It would be unworthy of the defender of the most noble institution in America, to descend to reply to them.

ONE WORD ABOUT THE CONTROVERSY WHICH HAS PRODUCED THIS DISCUSSION.

It would be unpardonable in a layman to leave this question here. He ought to recollect the time, when these scholastick disputes were as little familiar to himself, as they generally are to the great body of laymen throughout our country.

The opponents of true christianity and free inquiry have chosen to deal in general terms, and they rely on general denunciations rather than on reasoning. They raise the cry of heretick and infidel, because they hope it will be as effectual, as that of "church and king" in England.

But they must not be permitted to remain under the almost impenetrable cover of their mysteries and their watch-words.

If our doctrines are heretical, let it be known. If they are scriptural, let them be defended.

I rejoice in this occasion, as it will compel our clergymen to expose the errors, which their aversion to controversy has induced them to spare. The great point which has given occasion to this libel is, that many of our divines,

after deliberate research, do not find the doctrine of the *Trinity* in the holy scriptures. They do not believe, that the great Jehovah hath any copartners in his power. They do not believe, that the great God himself dwelt upon the earth in human shape, and was buffeted and put to death by men. They believe in the *Divinity*, or divine mission, though not in the *Deity* of Christ. They believe, that the Son was what he declared himself to be, inferiour to the Father ; that the works which he wrought, were those of God who sent him. Whilst the subordination and dependence of the Son appear to them undoubted, they agree in the most noble and exalted ideas of the Saviour. They desire to honour him in all the offices he is represented to sustain in behalf of mankind, and believe and acknowledge all respecting his nature and rank, which the scriptures, upon examination, are found to teach. They differ from each other in their conceptions on this point, as the Trinitarians do in their definitions ; but they consider, that these differences, being such as may perfectly consist with the love of truth, ought not to be a ground of denying each other's christianity.

As to the general doctrine of the inferiority and derivation of the Son, they think it every-where taught in the New Testament, and necessarily inferred from innumerable passages. But this their adherence to scriptural religion, and what they suppose declared in Christ's gospel, is regarded as *a crime*, unless they also believe in it, as explained and delivered in words of man's device, by certain ecclesiasticks, transported by the rage of controversy, who lived three hundred years after the death of the Saviour, and in following periods.

Besides the obscure or contradictory statements of the doctrine of the Trinity, which the Calvinists would have us believe, there are other points, for doubting which our

teachers are anathematized, and we their hearers are enjoined to renounce them; which points I think it would be well should be laid open. It is really important to know whether the scriptures teach such doctrines as these scholastick divines pretend; because if they do, we must review the evidences of the sacred book, and see if it be possible, that a good and just God can have made such a revelation.

We must believe, they say, *the imputation of the sin of Adam*; according, however, to the last edition of the doctrine. (For these gentlemen, who call us infidels, for not taking our creed as laid down by the reformers, with whom this doctrine did not come into dispute, or the Westminster divines, have taken the liberty for themselves to new model this article,) we must believe, as I understand them, that God willed the sin of Adam, and moreover willed, as it was formerly, that the guilt of this sin should descend upon all his posterity; but as it is laid down in the *Improved Version*,* that, in consequence of his disobedience, all his descendants were *constituted* sinners—born with a nature totally depraved, utterly incapable of any act of virtue—but subject for this sin of their progenitor, or the moral impotence which it entailed upon them, to the wrath and curse of God, and the pains of Hell for ever.†

Corresponding to this doctrine of original helpless depravity and guilt, are the doctrines of *irrespective decrees and special grace*; by which we learn, that some, elected from eternity of mere good pleasure, without any regard to their disposition or character, are the subjects of a special super-

* See creed of the Andover Institution.

† The eternal misery of those dying in infancy, except the children of believers, (*i. e.* Calvinists,) was long considered the necessary inference from this doctrine of original sin. The orthodox now, I believe, are so good as to say, that possibly they may not go to Hell; or, if they do, it will not be to the *worst part* of the infernal regions.

natural influence, giving them saving faith, a particular exercise towards the Saviour, which orthodoxy seems to put as the sign or the substitute of the whole of duty which secures their admission to Heaven; whilst the other part of the race, and the great majority, incapable of any acceptable act without this grace, which yet God will not give, and which they can neither do any thing, nor even desire nor try to do any thing, to procure, are doomed to eternal wrath.

Then follows the comfortable doctrine of *Saints' perseverance*, which teaches, that having received this grace, they will never lose it; they need not fear being cast off, whatever sins they may be left to commit.

These and other views of religion, contained in this iron system, appear to many laymen as well as clergymen, most false and pernicious, proceeding from a vain spirit of speculation, and the dotage of system, contrary to the general tenour of the scriptures, and supported only by single, detached, and figurative expressions, understood in the gross and literal sense. They appear to us hurtful to general morality, opposed to the true character of God, tending to produce intolerable spiritual pride and bigotry in one class, often the least worthy, and causeless anxiety and tormenting oppression in another; whilst aversion and skepticism towards all religion are often generated by them in the minds of multitudes.

I am glad that these subjects will now be investigated and displayed before the publick.

Much is said about the early reformers, and the faith which they held, and it is made an accusation against the real christians of the present day, that they do not adopt all the opinions of the first reformers. It would be strange indeed, and against all analogy and experience, if these had passed suddenly from great corruptions to the most perfect

light. Some of the early prejudices of their youth and education would adhere to them ; and it is an historical fact, that no sooner were they relieved from the thralldom of the Romish church, than they adopted the same spirit of persecution, and maintained the same abominable doctrine of the supremacy of the church, that the Pope had done.

Some however had more catholick ideas, and I shall conclude this essay with the sentiments of the venerable Mr. Robinson, the pastor of the church at Leyden, who were afterwards the founders of New-England. "Brethren, if God reveal any thing unto you, be as ready to receive it as you were any thing by my ministry, for I am *verily persuaded*, I am very confident, that the Lord has more truth yet to break forth out of his holy word. For my part, I cannot sufficiently bewail the condition of the reformed churches, who are come to a period in religion, and will go no farther than the instruments of their reformation. The Lutherans cannot be persuaded to go beyond what Luther saw, and the Calvinists, you see, stick fast where they were left by that great man of God, who yet *saw not all things*. This is a *misery* much to be lamented. For though they were burning and shining lights in *their* times, yet they penetrated not the whole counsel of God, but, were they now living, would be as willing to embrace still farther light, as that which they first received. It is *not possible* the christian world should come so lately out of antichristian darkness, and that *perfection of knowledge* should break forth at once."

Such were the Catholick sentiments of one of the founders of the New-England church, in the early days of the reformation ; and now, when we have had the light of two centuries added to the knowledge which the world then possessed, centuries, in which christianity has been better discussed, and more research has been made in the

scriptures, than in all the ages which preceded them, including that of the Genevan Reformer, we are told by a set of men, who had rather dictate than study, that we must not alter a letter in the creed of Calvin !!!

If any should be disposed to censure the temper in which this vindication is written, they should remember, that we are not the assailants. They should peruse the Panoplist Review. They will perceive that it is written with the most unchristian spirit, and is couched in the most offensive terms, of any writings, which these evil times have produced.

There is a moderation, sometimes, which betrays, and which is as unbecoming as the want of it is at others.

If when our venerated pastors and friends are treated as if they were the worst of felons, we imitate the modern Tartuffes, and meet their calumniators with a smile, and a placid and serene countenance, we shall be thought to be pleased or indifferent rather than indignant.

It is from the scriptures, that we are to learn what ought to be our behaviour in such cases. Even our Lord and master always adapted his language to the persons and the case. When he had occasion to speak of the scribes and Pharisees of *his* day, he scruples not to treat them as they deserve.

There was something in their spirit very much like that of the Review in question.

Do men believe, that the race of scribes and Pharisees has failed? or do they imagine, that they are not at this day as deserving of the censure of our Saviour, as their predecessors in Jerusalem?

What condemnation would our Saviour pass on those men, who make his gospel a cloak to cover, while they gratify, the most unholy passions?

This must be my defence. I have no personal feeling towards these accusers. The greater part of them I never saw. I judge of them only by their fruits; and by their fruits I should say, that I have no wish to know them more. It should be recollected, that it is the cause of laymen that I defend, against an attempt to control the freedom of their opinions, and their right of selecting their pastors.

CONCLUDING ADDRESS.

TO LAYMEN OF ALL SECTS.

MY BRETHREN,

It is impossible that you should have read with attention the history of the church of Christ, without being deeply impressed with the conviction, that human passions are never so strong, and the powers of reasoning never so much perverted, as when employed upon the controverted points of religion. It is true, that this is the most momentous of all concerns; but it is as true, that the interests of christianity cannot be promoted by a temper, which that religion expressly condemns, and the opposite to which forms its most distinguished glory and praise. Whether this vehemence, injustice and intolerance, this *odium theologicum*, which have marked, while they have impeded and injured, the progress of christianity in all ages, (at least since the apostolical influence ceased to operate) are to be attributed to the shelter and security which men feel in the indulgence of unworthy passions, under the specious cloak of conscience, or whether these bigots (for there have been such on all sides) are really more transported beyond the bounds of moderation on this topick, than on any other, I leave to others more versed in the human character to decide.

This however we all know, that the over zealous leaders on theological questions have been generally ambitious and intriguing men. They have acted in all times, as if their own glory and advancement, and not those of religion, were the objects of their pursuit.

We cannot review the state of religious controversy in Massachusetts, and the recent clamours which have been excited against certain pastors and certain tenets, without recollecting, what we know to be the fact, that for many years, Dr. Morse, and those who have chosen to identify their cause with his character and views, knew as well as they now do, that many of the Boston clergy held opinions opposed to those of Calvin, and in conformity with the simple doctrines which our Saviour himself taught. They knew also, that these opinions were generally prevalent among the laity in their parishes. Yet, during all this period, Dr. Morse courted their friendship, and held an intimate intercourse with the men he now denounces as heretical. It was not till after his ambitious views on the college were defeated, and till most of the parishes in Boston felt a repugnance to his introduction into their pulpits, on various grounds, that he became an open assailant.

We naturally ask, is it possible that the great body of intelligent laymen in Connecticut and Massachusetts can countenance an attempt to invade the rights of conscience, originating in the ignoble passions of aspiring and intriguing men? Can they believe, that a great part of the citizens of the metropolis of New England will be driven from their faith by threats and insults, as impotent as they are unbecoming?

Could a German monk, like Luther, encounter the power and brave the resentment of such a potentate as Charles the V. and do they believe that we are to be awed into

silence, or frowned into submission, by a few intolerant and assuming men?

No. Our opinions are too firmly rooted, and our knowledge of our rights too deeply settled, to permit them to form such hopes. But the friends of christianity have more interesting considerations to weigh. Whether they consider us as orthodox or hereticks, still they know we make open profession of christianity. We support it as far as we are able by our morals and manners, our publick professions, contributions and zeal.

They should recollect, that our country presents a motley mixture of atheists, deists, and sectarians of all shades and all opinions.

Surely, in such a state of things, it cannot be deemed advantageous to the cause of christianity, to engage in a crusade against men, who are among the most pacifick and sincere friends of christianity, whose example, influence, and exertions are uniformly directed to its support and extension, and whose greatest crime is, that they have shewn an indisposition to proselytism.

If our faith be as heretical as is pretended, it cannot be for the interest of those, who call themselves the only wise and sound part, the orthodox, to give us the zeal, the form, and consistency of party.

We are all well aware, what were the hopes entertained and the designs formed by a few bigots, who have calumniated our teachers, and attempted to undermine their influence by arts, which would be a reproach to *any* cause, and which are scandalous in one of so solemn a nature.

They hoped, that the cry of heresy would operate like the spiritual thunders of the Vatican. Like Paul IV, they intended to revive the spirit of persecution of another age, forgetting, like him, that the day of spiritual tyranny had gone by, and that the thunder would be heard, like the mimick artillery of the stage.

If I were a zealot in favour of liberal christianity, which I am far from being, if I wished to see it extended and triumphant, I should say, "Persecute us, compel us to exert our talents, to take the form and assume the spirit of a party. Undeified and uncorrupted christianity, so long restrained by civil power in other countries, might then spread. Become a sect and distinction, it would soon have all the energy which belongs to other sects." But this is against our principles. We wish it to make the silent but sure progress, which truth will always make, as knowledge and virtue extend themselves.

As to the zeal which is now displayed in favour of Calvinism, you must all be sensible, that it is not greater than that, which so long supported, and still supports the worst doctrines of the Romish church.

It is not comparable to the ardour and sincerity of those, who in the days which the orthodox call so enlightened, persecuted the persons charged with sorcery.

Yet we well know, that after the delusion of the moment had past away, men saw none of those open interferences of the devil, none of those supernatural agencies, which so long deceived a fanatical people, and the belief of which, to the disgrace of our nation, found its way even into the sanctuaries of justice. So too, we would fain hope and sincerely believe, that when the present infatuation shall have subsided, we shall not find men placing religion in those miraculous conversions which afford such *consolatory* matter for the Panoplist. Strange consolation indeed! wonderful perversion of human reason! to exult over the unhappy victims of deluded fanaticism!

Not a year passes over our heads, in which there are not many persons of amiable and susceptible feelings, driven by mistaken views of God and religion, to the desperation of suicide. I count not the thousands who suffer tortures

produced by a melancholy which neither amends the heart nor purifies the life, while it renders the subjects of the malady useless to society, and a burden to themselves. Such are the frequent fruits of a doctrine derogatory to God, and wholly unfounded in scripture ! Laymen naturally take simpler views of religion, than those who are involved in the subtleties of scholastick divinity.

We ask not, what may possibly be the construction of an obscure passage in scripture, written in a language sufficiently, but at best imperfectly, understood, addressed to men who had particular prejudices, which it was the object of the apostles to overcome ; we rather ask for distinct and intelligible rules, for facts, for narrative, for examples. We search the scriptures in vain for precedents of those gloomy conversions, which are now represented as the only sure tests of regeneration and acceptance with God. Were the catechumens, or newly converted christians, required to shew such a morbid and melancholy state of mind, as are at this day considered the proofs of the gracious interference of God ? No. Is there a case of suicide produced by the picture given by the apostles of the attributes of God ? Not one. It is not more true that the doctrines taught by our Saviour did not produce these bitter fruits which the tree of Calvinism brings forth, than it is, that we seldom see this sudden conversion, or this morbid melancholy, among the conspicuous leaders and teachers of these doctrines. No. The penance belongs altogether to the laity. The chief duty of the spiritual fathers is to preserve their authority, and extend the influence of their body. Hence we have seen in our day a new creation ; extended associations with indefinite powers. A new "society of Jesus" with more than one Loyola at its head.

People who are acquainted with ecclesiastical history will not smile at the idea of this new combination. The

Panoplist may ridicule as much as it pleases the suggestion that they aim at Ecclesiastical tyranny. We perceive from their spirit, that the power only is wanting.

These new associations, if not watched and made the objects of jealousy, will soon become tremendous engines in the hands of skilful and ambitious men. The Roman pontiff who dethroned monarchs, and brought the emperours of Europe to his feet, was only the simple successour of St. Peter, who walked barefooted to Rome, and fell a martyr to his faith, in that city where his successour sat enthroned in purple.

At this moment, the general associations, though created with the view of forcing conformity to Calvinism, and extirpating heresy, appear very harmless. They terminate in pleasant tours at free cost: much respect and good cheer to the *delegates*.

If the end should be defeated, the reward is felt in the honour and distinction of those employed. If succesful, and heresy should be put down; if they can force the inhabitants of opulent towns to reject their beloved pastors, much fame will attend the labourers, and some solid rewards.

Laymen in general, I fear, have not noticed this alarming inroad on our ecclesiastical constitution. A new form of government has been introduced, without the authority of the people or the state. For nearly two hundred years the discipline of our churches rested on the Cambridge platform. There were no general associations, no ecclesiastical assemblies which arrogated to themselves the right of settling matters of faith. All these things were regulated by councils either mutual or ex parte, called for each particular case. The general convention of Congregational ministers never assumed to itself supervisory, or legislative, or judicial powers. If any publick body had a right to assume them, certainly that body had.

Suddenly we find rising up, associations in every state, to which only one party are invited, and these again are strengthened by similar associations through almost all the northern states.

To what valuable or even honourable end these societies can be directed, it is difficult to perceive; but that they may have the most pernicious effects on the rights and liberties of the citizens in matters of faith we can all see.

The authority of general councils, and of the Roman see, took its rise in commencements infinitely more feeble.

Once established and acquiesced in, they might proceed as the associations in Connecticut have sometimes done, to separate a parish and its pastor, where they were perfectly harmonious; and to strip a clergyman of his sacerdotal character, for being faithful to his master.

At present, however, the scheme appears to us as absurd and quixotick as it is bold and unjustifiable.

A set of men, surrounded with enemies in their own camp, with Methodists, and Baptists, and Universalists, scarcely able to meet their parochial and domestick foes, combine to carry their spiritual arms into the territories of their natural allies, the liberal christians; allies who, attached to christianity on principle, convinced of its truth, zealous for its propagation, but determined that it shall not suffer by a misrepresentation of its principles, have no other end in view, than union and harmony in the christian church, and the liberty of worshipping God conformably to what they believe the scripture rules.

Although, from necessity, I have used general terms when speaking of the orthodox, because such terms were assumed by Dr. Worcester and the editors of the Panoplist, yet I do not contend (as they do) with regard to Unitarians, that all the persons, who agree with them on some points, are responsible for all their opinions or unfair proceedings.

I rejoice to believe that the greater part of the Calvinists, or the orthodox, or the true christians, (or whatever other name they may choose to assume,) disapprove the very improper, uncharitable measures, adopted by these persons who have undertaken to speak in their name.

I would fain believe, nay, I do verily believe, that there are not ten clergymen in this state, who do not in their hearts condemn the shameful article in the Panoplist, and the violent and indecent measures taken to bring about a theological quarrel. If I am mistaken in this, I shall be compelled to withdraw much of the respect I yet have for the Calvinistick clergy.

I am aware that it may be said by the orthodox, we consider your opinions as heretical, we view them as hostile to the essential doctrines of christianity, and that we are as much bound to oppose them as the attacks of avowed unbelievers. But it should be recollected that this is the same language which was employed by the Catholicks in opposition to the Reformers. If these gentlemen are sincere in this opinion, let them adopt the only course which the principles of the reformation admit. Let them attack these heresies, if they deem them such, by argument, not by associations. Names and numbers have no tendency, in such an age as this to enforce the belief of opinions which must depend on argument and fact. Let them assert the doctrine of the infallibility of the early reformers, and shew, that they arrived at once from the the darkest superstition and the most absurd opinions, to the most perfect light—that they possessed the gift of inspiration, and that to their opinions full and implicit faith is due.

But surely the course which has been adopted is not consonant to fair reasoning, or the spirit of the gospel. It cannot be reputable for any sect to set forward the most audacious and least respected of their party, to overwhelm their adversaries with abuse and calumny. To place at

their head, men in whom neither party have confidence. Let them rather select the ablest and purest, and meekest persons of their party, and depute them to display and defend their doctrines in a temperate and rational manner. It is by force of reasoning alone that christianity has made its principal progress in the world. It is one of its most powerful arguments and supports in opposition to Mahometanism and other false religions, that it has not generally employed the sword, but has relied on its intrinsick merit for its support.

This principle ought not to be deserted in cases of dissension as to the more minute doctrines of the gospel. To use the weapons of scurrility and abuse on this most solemn subject, to excite the worst passions of mankind, and more especially to form combinations to put down free inquiry and excite odium against those who hold opinions differing from ours, would argue a spirit little less hostile than the expedient of the darker ages, the condemnation of hereticks to the stake.

We therefore hope, that all parties will unite in condemning this illiberal spirit. That there will be a common consent to denounce, as unworthy of the cause of Christ, such publications as the Review in the Panoplist, and that the orthodox will with one voice agree to advise Dr. Worcester, to adopt a course in some small degree consonant to the spirit of the gospel, and to the enlightened age which it has pleased God to permit us to enjoy. In a struggle to elicit truth, to establish the fundamental articles of christianity, we engage that the liberal clergy will not shrink from their share of the labour, and we pledge ourselves, from our knowledge of them, that they will not be outdone in zeal for christianity, in efforts to draw from the rich mines of literature and biblical learning the means of informing the minds, and settling the faith of christians.

A LAYMAN.

NOTE.

I HAVE said, that I could not condescend to notice the scurrilous attacks of the Panoplist on the revered head of our University.

There seemed to be something so base, in setting "children" to watch the exercises on publick occasions, and collecting "respectable gentlemen from different parts of the American union" to act as inquisitors upon the occasion, that I could not persuade myself, that such measures would produce any other sensation than contempt.

But as I have an opportunity of shewing the temper with which the Panoplist is conducted, and the means which it has adopted to cast an odium on the college, I think I ought not to omit it. It was stated in the Panoplist that Dr. Kirkland had written "a letter of consolation and encouragement to the new Unitarian church in Philadelphia."

We presumed this must have been true. We could not have believed that any clergyman would have dared to suggest such a thing without evidence.

It seems, however, from the evidence we are now to exhibit, that it was *not true*.

One of the gentlemen who officiate in that church having seen the Panoplist, of his own accord wrote in a letter to his friend in Boston, the original of which is now before me, as follows :

"I perceive he, Dr. Kirkland, is accused of having written a letter of consolation and encouragement to the new Unitarian church in Philadelphia.

"Had the fact been so, there is nothing to call forth any censure, as not a word of the letter is even quoted : but the truth is, no such letter was ever written.

"I have made strict inquiry, and find that there was a letter written by Dr. Kirkland to Mr. Vaughan, in answer to some queries as to the terms of admission and tuition at Cambridge, and the rules of the college, and this, or a non-entity, must be the letter of encouragement and consolation, which we, like our apostle Belsham, have been complaisant enough to publish, by shewing it to some of our orthodox friends. "Our apostle Belsham," with whom we have neither intercourse nor correspondence, and to whose creed, as set forth in the Panoplist, I hazard nothing in saying not one of us would assent.

"I should like if it were possible, to put such a man as the writer of the article in the *Panoplist* to the blush, to ask him when this letter was written, to whom it was addressed, who was made acquainted with its contents, and what it really did contain.

"After so gross a falsehood, the strictures on the prayers of the President can only deceive those who are resolved to support what they call orthodoxy at the expense of truth and consistency. Perhaps it may not be amiss to mention the fact now stated. You well know my situation in our church, and that if any letter of consolation had been sent from so respectable a quarter as the above, I could not have been kept in ignorance either of its contents or existence. You also know that we have never been in a situation to need consolation. Among ourselves we have had uninterrupted harmony, and all the calumnies and denunciations of 'the pious,' the 'orthodox,' and the 'evangelical' have been unheeded."

NOTE 2.

After the foregoing remarks were put to the press, I received the last number of the *Panoplist*, which contains the proceedings of one of the new grand associations, to which I have referred, and whose object is now more distinctly developed, than it has heretofore been. It is too late for me to enter into the consideration of the deep project which is now laid open, to break down the constitution, by which the churches of this state have been governed for more than a century and an half. It will require a separate and more enlarged examination than I can possibly give to it in the present stage of my essay. I have no doubt that it will excite such feelings as will call forth the ablest champions of the rights of the church.

This project, though covered by as much art and sophistry, as has ever been displayed by men aiming at secret encroachments on the rights of others, is simply this, under colour of enforcing and amending, to abrogate and annul, the Cambridge platform, which has been the rule of discipline, and palladium of our religious liberties, from the earliest settlement of our country, and to substitute in its place a new ecclesiastical tribunal, unknown to our ancestors, and subversive of our religious rights.

To give it some degree of respect from antiquity, an obsolete manuscript of Dr. Cotton Mather has been drawn forth from the rubbish of the last century, and is now attempted to be imposed upon the christian churches of this state as the rule of their government. Even these gentlemen did not venture on their own popularity to hazard such an innovation and revolution in

the church. Even *they* are constrained to admit that it was so odious in Massachusetts, in 1706, when it was proposed, "that there were some considerable persons among the *ministers*, (even in *that day*) as well as of the *brethren*, who thought the *liberties of particular churches* to be in danger of being *limited* and *infringed* by them. In deference to these, the proposals were never prosecuted beyond the bounds of *mere proposals*."

In other words, they did not dare *attempt* to carry the proposals into effect, at a time when religious liberty was less understood, and the rights of conscience less valued than at this moment.

And why did they not? Because the proposals go to the utter abolition of the right of churches to govern themselves.

They confer the right on ecclesiastical councils, to put any church out of the pale of christian communion. They confer the right on these councils, not chosen by the parties, to refuse ordination, and to depose any clergyman, even against the consent of any member of *his own church and parish*. The reservation of not extending the power beyond the churches who may join this confederacy, against the liberties of the people, we know how to appreciate, by the conduct of the Tolland association.

We are however encouraged to accept it, by the suggestion that Connecticut did at that day adopt it. Yes, she did, and we have seen its fruits. The recommendation in brief is, that Massachusetts shall abolish her religious charter, and conform her discipline to that of Connecticut, though she nobly refused so to do, one hundred years ago.

I am pleased to see, that the association had not sufficient indiscretion to recommend this project for immediate adoption. I flatter myself that the greater part of them disapprove it. If adopted, it will prove a fatal blow to the influence and standing of the Congregational clergy. The forcing through such a plan, in derogation of our present church constitution, and tending to destroy the only check which laymen now have on ecclesiastical usurpation, I am afraid would be the signal of commotions in the church, which would only end in the utter destruction of Congregational churches and discipline. This is no idle fear. It is solemn conviction. Many are the hours which most distinguished laymen have spent, and great have been their exertions, to stem that torrent of innovation and opposition to the regular clergy, which for twenty years has threatened to undermine the feeble props which they still enjoy under the constitution.

But if the minority feel that they are to be oppressed, if revolutions are to be set on foot by those whom the laity have laboured to protect, they must suppose them to be more than

men, if they continue to offer themselves as a rampart to protect those who are labouring to destroy their dearest rights.

It would be easy to shew, and it will be shewn, that this project is also a direct violation of the constitution, laws, and liberties of Massachusetts. Men can make any associations they please, but they cannot give them the smallest practical efficacy or power without the aid of the government. If they invite that government to interfere in ecclesiastical affairs, and to regulate the discipline or faith of churches, they will soon find, that they have entered a path beset with thorns, from which they may in vain wish to extricate themselves. Abolish the Cambridge Platform, and the Congregational churches will soon be found on a tempestuous sea, without compass, or rudder, or pilots. The courts of law will however protect the people against such usurpations.

We ask, if such a plan was deemed proper, why did they not submit it to the Convention of Ministers in Massachusetts, to whom it was first submitted by Mr. Mather?

Why ask the consent of a body unknown to our laws and usages, a body self created, and naturally liable to suspicion, as it excludes all who differ from it in articles of faith?

Such proceedings must and will excite distrust. They furnish a new proof, that clergymen are too apt to neglect the most useful study, that of mankind, although their chief object ought to be to know them thoroughly, in order to be useful to them in their ministry. It will not tend to render the new scheme more acceptable to the publick, that its arrangement was confided to those who do not enjoy much of the publick confidence.—The project appears to have been formed, and is subscribed, only by Jedidiah Morse of Connecticut. It is worthy of consideration, whether there should not be a covenant instantly formed by the friends of religious freedom, and of the Cambridge Platform, for its defence against all schemes of innovation, and a publick convention of laity and clergy of those opinions, called to adopt measures to counteract this conspiracy against the church and its ancient rights.

The foregoing strictures were principally written and in the press, at a time when it was supposed that Mr. Channing would not reply to such a letter as Dr. Worcester's. Had it been known that Mr. Channing would have undertaken his own justification, many of the foregoing remarks would have been suppressed as unnecessary.

AN INQUIRY

INTO THE RIGHT TO CHANGE THE

ECCLESIASTICAL CONSTITUTION

OF THE

CONGREGATIONAL CHURCHES

OF MASSACHUSETTS.

WITH A PREFACE, ADDRESSED TO THE REV. JOSEPH LYMAN, D. D.
UNDER THE SANCTION OF WHOSE NAME SUCH A CHANGE HAS
BEEN PROPOSED TO THE PEOPLE OF THIS STATE.

TO WHICH IS PREFIXED,

Dr. Morse's Report to the General Association of Massachusetts, from the
Panoplist of August, 1815.

BOSTON :

PRINTED AND PUBLISHED BY WELLS AND LILLY.

1816.



From the PANOPLIST, August, 1815. Volume eleventh, p. 357.

RELIGIOUS INTELLIGENCE.

EXTRACTS FROM THE MINUTES OF THE GENERAL ASSOCIATION OF MASSACHUSETTS PROPER, HOLDEN AT ROYALSTON, ON THE FOURTH TUESDAY, VIZ. THE 27TH DAY OF JUNE, A. D. 1815, AND CONTINUED BY ADJOURNMENT TO THE 29TH OF THE SAME MONTH.

The Rev. Joseph Lyman, D.D. was chosen Moderator, and the Rev. James Murdock, and the Rev. John Codman, were chosen Scribes.

The members next presented their credentials.

Thursday morning, June 29th, 3 A.M. met according to adjournment. After prayer took up the business assigned to this hour.

Voted, to go into a free discussion of the subject of the following motion: "That the Report of the Committee appointed to inquire into the history of an original MS. Document, &c. be printed, and copies sent to the several Associations in our connexion, for the purpose of ascertaining the publick sentiments respecting the plan of ecclesiastical order therein presented, and that the subject be called up at the next meeting of the General Association." After the discussion, the motion was passed into a vote, and Messrs. Morse, Codman and Woods, appointed a Committee for publishing the above mentioned Report, with instructions to print it in connexion with the preceding vote.

REPORT TO GENERAL ASSOCIATION.

THE Committee of the General Association of Massachusetts Proper, appointed at their last annual meeting at Dorchester, "to inquire into the history of *an original MS. document,** found among the papers of Rev. DR. COTTON MATHER, containing an answer to the question, 'What further steps are to be taken, that Councils may have their due constitution and efficacy in supporting, preserving, and well ordering, the interest of the Churches in the country?' And 'particularly to ascertain, whether the resolves it contains were carried into execution at the time, and to what extent; and to report at the next annual meeting of this Association, on the expediency of a recommendation of this body, of the plan of discipline there proposed, either entire, or with alterations and amendments, to the consideration of the Associations and churches in our connexion,'"—have attended deliberately and prayerfully to the weighty and very important business committed to them, and respectfully submit the following

REPORT.

THE *history* of the Document abovescribed, other than what is contained in the published minutes of the last meeting of the General Association,† so far as your Committee have been able to ascertain it, is summarily as follows: Shortly after it had received the sanction of the Convention of Ministers in Massachusetts at their annual meeting in May, 1706, this Document was published by the Rev. JOHN WISE,

* This Document may be found in the Panoplist for July 1814, p. 320.

† See Panoplist before quoted.

of Ipswich, in a work entitled "*The Churches' Quarrel Espoused*." The signatures, and the fact that the Proposals received the approbation of the Convention of Ministers, were omitted by Mr. WISE, in his publication, and appeared in print for the first time, in the Minutes of this Association.

The Proposals embraced under the *first* Division, recommending the formation of Associations, and suggesting their appropriate duties, it appears were so far regarded, as that twenty years after, "the country was full of Associations, formed by the pastors in their several vicinities, for the prosecution of evangelical purposes."* The Proposals under the *second* Division, recommending the *Consociation* of the pastors and Churches, and forming them into standing ecclesiastical Councils, for certain purposes therein stated, were (as Dr. C. Mather informs us, in his *Ratio Disciplina*, published in 1726) substantially adopted, at the time, in Connecticut, and have ever since formed the basis of their ecclesiastical proceedings. In Massachusetts the same writer states, that "there were some very considerable persons among the ministers, as well as of the brethren, who thought the liberties of particular Churches to be in danger of being *limited* and *infringed* in them. In deference to these, (he adds) the proposals were never prosecuted beyond the bounds of mere proposals."†

Your Committee, in this place, take leave, in fulfilment of a part of the duty assigned them, to state, that the Proposals last alluded to are, in various respects such, that in their opinion congregational ministers cannot consistently recommend or approve them. They forbear to enlarge on this subject, and beg leave to refer to the plan submitted at the close of this report, as containing the deliberate views of the Committee.

Further light, your Committee conceive, may be thrown on the history of the Document in question, by a recurrence to its origin and design, which may be inferred from its introductory sentence—"To serve the great intentions of Religion, which is lamentably decaying in the country." Viewing, as it appears they did, with deep concern, a visible decline in the order, discipline, purity, and fruitfulness of the Churches, the body of the Clergy of that day, devised the means suggested in the Proposals in question, as the best remedy against existing evils. The principal cause, of this lamentable decay of religion, in the view of the framers of these Proposals, may be inferred from the remedies which they propose for their removal; and from a paper annexed* to this report, published about the year 1700.† Among the most operative of these causes appear to have been laxness in discipline, and a growing defect in the fellowship, union and co-operation among the Churches and their pastors.‡ These radical evils, which generated many others, had been gradually increasing for about half a

* *Ratio Disciplina*, p. 181.

† *Ibid.* p. 184.

‡ See this Paper entitled, "More particular prognostications upon the future state of New-England," in the *Panoplist*, for July 1814, p. 324. It is referred to the reader's particular attention.

§ One of the evils complained of, and which prompted the movers of the measures proposed in the document under consideration, is thus stated: "When Councils are called by *litigant parties* in churches, upon emergencies, it had been hitherto in the liberty of each party, to choose and call their own councils, where they pleased; which left room for much partiality to operate, and one Council to succeed and op-

century after the Platform of the New-England Churches had been adopted at Cambridge. Fifty years experience had taught discerning men, both of the laity and clergy, that some further measures were necessary to carry into full effect some of the salutary provisions of that Instrument; those particularly which were designed to regulate the fellowship and discipline of the churches. Other provisions relating to the introduction, discipline, and dismissal of ministers, were found inexpedient in practice, and of course fell into disuse. In managing these important ecclesiastical concerns, so intimately connected with the general welfare of religion, the Churches were left, each to its own discretion, without any generally acknowledged uniform rule to govern them; and the Platform, thus disregarded in some of its essential provisions, gradually ceased to be a guide of discipline, and a bond of union in the Churches. That fellowship, mutual affection, and care; that agreement in the fundamental articles of the Christian faith, which, from the first planting of these churches had happily subsisted among them, cemented their union, and produced the best effects, after the lapse of a half a century, began visibly to decline. The wise and pious among the watchmen, perceiving these things, were justly alarmed at the inevitable consequences, and felt it to be an imperious duty to exert their best efforts to stay these evils, by strengthening the things which remained, and which were ready to die.

It was in this state of the churches, and on a deliberate view of these evils, that the Proposals in question, were devised, and on due consideration, adopted by the Convention of the clergy.

Your Committee have not sufficient facts in their possession determinately to state the various causes which operated to prevent these Proposals from going into effect. Their form was not the most unexceptionable, and hence was afforded advantage to opposers. The Consociation of Churches, though not precisely in the manner delineated in these Proposals, was not new to Christians in New-England. They well knew, that the primitive churches in the three first centuries, were in fact, if not in form, consociated. The principles of Consociation were recognised, in the Platform, and in their deliberate judgment were supported by the word of God.

In 1716, Dr. Increase Mather published his "Disquisition concerning Ecclesiastical Councils." It does not appear that he approved these proposals. Yet so far was he, from being "disaffected to the Consociation of Churches, in order to the preservation of the faith and order of the gospel" among them, that, he expressly declares, he considers such a measure "not only lawful, but *absolutely necessary* for the establishment of the churches"—that "light of natural reason, as well as scripture, teaches churches in common with other societies, to associate and combine for their common safety"—that, "this was practised in the primitive times of Christianity, and by most of the reformed churches, at that time existing in Europe"—and that "a due attendance to the communion and consociation of churches, will, by the blessing of the Lord Jesus Christ, be a good means to prevent degeneracy and to establish them in that holy faith and order of the gospel which has been professed and practised among them; and by

pose another with an endless confusion, more proper for a *Babel* than a *city of God*." It was hence "thought that prudence called for a more effectual provision."^{*}

^{*} *Ratio Disciplinae*, p. 183.

which the religious people in New-England have been distinguished."—He concludes by recommending the Consociation of Churches, in the form submitted by your Committee, at the close of this Report, as his "dying farewell to the churches in New-England. *So will New-England remain New-England.*"

The consequences of disregarding this sound advice, have been witnessed in the state of the churches in Massachusetts for a century past, and are apparent in their present state. No man can survey the Christian ministry and churches in this Commonwealth, without deep solicitude and grief. Comparing our religious state with the standard set before us in the word of God, or in the example of the early churches of New-England, we can hardly refrain from exclaiming, "How is the gold become dim!" Doubtless the grand cause of the disordered state of the churches is, generally speaking, the want of growing personal holiness.

Your Committee consider it their special duty to call the attention of the General Association to *those evils in our ecclesiastical state, which affect churches and ministers in their publick character and in their relation to each other.*

That churches and pastors of churches do in fact sustain an important relation to each other, and also what the nature of that relation is, must be clear to every man, who duly considers, that they are all members of one kingdom, and subject to the authority of one King; that they are all partakers of one Spirit, and enlisted into one and the same cause; and that they are frequently called, in discharge of their duty, to promote a common interest. The relation existing among churches and ministers was constituted by God himself, and cannot be set aside, without opposing divine wisdom, and taking away the very foundation of christian society.

The principle of *ministerial and church fellowship* must be considered as of prime consequence, and it is obviously from a growing disregard of this principle, that the various evils, of which we complain, have resulted,—not that the principle of fellowship has been openly disavowed; for it is expressly recognised in our PLATFORM, and would certainly have been more largely insisted upon and more clearly defined, had there been the same occasion for it, that there is now. This principle is also tacitly allowed in many of our ecclesiastical proceedings. But it is, to a great extent, *practically disregarded*. It is not generally understood what the fellowship of ministers and churches is, or what are the reciprocal rights and obligations implied in it. These rights and obligations are no where clearly explained, and by men seriously contemplated. Indeed, with the exception of a few things which occasionally occur, and which appear like remaining fragments of a system once in existence, the sacred principle of fellowship among the churches is overlooked and forgotten.

But there are several particular evils in the present state of our ecclesiastical affairs, which demand distinct consideration.

The *first* is, a *prevailing neglect of discipline towards offending members of churches, and the difficulty of going through a regular course of discipline, when attempted.*

The principal thing which we shall state, as having a tendency to increase and perpetuate this evil, is *the abandonment of the sacred principle of fellowship among the churches.* In maintaining faithful disci-

pline over its members, every church needs the united support of other churches. Their relation to the individual church ought in this case to be perfectly visible, and their determination and influence in favour of strict discipline to be known and felt by all. Were it so, the offender, who might be disposed to be discontented and refractory, seeing that he could obtain no countenance from abroad, would find it necessary to submit; and thus, in a multitude of cases, difficulty would be prevented and church order established.

But in the present disjointed state of things, an offender, who grows impatient of restraint, and desirous to get rid of wholesome discipline, is able to obtain, from some quarter, the support he wishes, and thus entirely to elude the authority of the church, or to create endless difficulty and disorder.

The abandonment of the principle of fellowship among the churches has promoted the evil above mentioned, by preventing a general agreement in the mode of discipline. At present there is no uniform system of rules to govern the conduct of churches. The Cambridge Platform, though an able and useful treatise, is not adopted and used as a manual of discipline in our churches. Indeed, though we should be among the first to plead for the general soundness of the principles contained in the Platform, we doubt whether those principles are exhibited in so precise and particular a manner, as the present state of things would require. Let the churches then, in the exercise of their own rights, carefully survey their disordered and exposed condition. Let them deliberate; let them consult; and upon the scriptural principles laid down in our Platform, let them agree to adopt a uniform system of rules for the regulation of church discipline.

Such a course as we have taken the liberty to suggest has often been pursued in civil affairs. The growing experience of states and nations has showed the necessity of erecting upon the basis of the Constitution first adopted a more perfect scheme of government,—of stating more explicitly what was in any measure equivocal,—of correcting new constructions,—of multiplying statutes suited to new exigencies,—and especially of pursuing measures, before unthought of, to carry into effect original provisions.

Whatever may be said in commendation of the Platform, it has long since ceased to be of general practical use. Its provisions are not carried into effect. By our churches at large, it is not regarded as of any consideration. It is then perfectly evident, that there is no agreement among our churches in a system of discipline.

The want of such agreement in a system of discipline has been the natural consequence of our abandoning the general principle of fellowship among the churches; and has contributed much to the prostration of christian order and government. Many members of churches, and some pastors of but little experience, are doubtful what to do. And if they venture to act, they are in danger of taking a course, which will give great advantage to delinquents, and impede the efficacy of the most faithful exertions.

Secondly. In the present state of things, there is no regular and acknowledged method in which congregational churches can exercise a christian watch and care over each other. A church, as well as an individual member, may apostatize from the common faith, and fall into disorders totally incompatible with the christian character. If such be the

fact with any church, can other churches in fellowship be indifferent?—But what shall they do?—If, without seeing evidence of repentance, they continue their fellowship, they give countenance to disorder. On the other hand, if, before investigating the grounds of dissatisfaction and taking proper measures to reclaim the offending church, they withhold communion, they offer violence to the common principles of fellowship and decorum. Clearly, nothing can with propriety be done, without an investigation. It is the duty of a church, in every such case, to submit to an investigation, and be ready to give reasonable satisfaction. A refusal to do this would be to renounce all fellowship. But what church in Massachusetts now practically claims the right to *ask*, or recognizes the obligation to *give* satisfaction. So distracted is the state of our ecclesiastical affairs, and so vague, and loose, and weak the principle of union, that churches in our fellowship may go to the greatest length of apostasy, without any inspection, and without losing that indefinite fellowship with us, which they before enjoyed.

Is it said, that an apostate church does expose itself to animadversion, and ought to be treated accordingly? Granted. But *upon what principle?* and *according to what acknowledged rule?* In the present posture of our ecclesiastical affairs, there can be no regular investigation of the case. Have we then a right to withhold fellowship from a church at our option, by a sovereign vote, and thus, perhaps without just cause, to wound its sensibilities and stigmatize its reputation? What a baneful influence would such a principle have? What ecclesiastical despotism and anarchy would it introduce?

Nothing seems calculated to secure us against these difficulties, but *an explicit acknowledgment of mutual responsibility among the churches, and a definite statement, in which all churches in fellowship with each other shall agree, of their reciprocal rights and obligations, and of the exact manner in which those rights shall be exercised and those obligations fulfilled.* But at present, there is no explicit acknowledgment of mutual responsibility, and no definite, intelligible statement of reciprocal rights and duties, or of the method of intercourse. Here, as in the case abovementioned, the Platform, which plainly exhibits the general duty of fellowship among the churches, is neither consulted nor acknowledged.

At the same time, the avowed sentiments of some, and the practical sentiments of many are such, as to exempt churches from all mutual inspection, and yet require us to have fellowship with all churches, calling themselves Congregational, whatever be their faith or conduct. And what is still more insufferable, we are under a kind of necessity of allowing our disorderly members to call in churches, the most defective in christian character, to censure our principles, to overturn our internal discipline, to sanction disorder and heresy, and to attack the reputation of faithful ministers.

These considerations clearly show that the principles of fellowship among the churches which are laid down in our Platform, are of vast importance, and must be carried into effect, before peace and prosperity can be found in our Zion. But there is no prospect of carrying those principles into effect without a great and united effort. The churches must deliberate, and act. On the basis of the principles asserted in the Platform, let them jointly settle a plan that shall be regular and practicable, of ascertaining the character of those churches with

which we are to be connected, of avoiding those which are corrupt, and of counselling and admonishing sister churches as occasion may require.

Thirdly. There is one more evil in our ecclesiastical affairs, which we think it necessary distinctly to notice, that is, *the want of a settled and effectual method of calling ministers to account for immorality and error, and of protecting them against calumny and injustice.* There is no reason why a minister should not be as subject to inspection as a private christian. Nay, the publicity and importance of his office, furnish special reasons, why he should enjoy the advantage of the most vigilant and faithful inspection. The body of men, who are to exercise this inspection, should be well known, their rights and duties well defined, and every thing relative to the mode of proceeding be, by common agreement, fully determined. The venerable authors of the Platform provided, though in terms not sufficiently definite for present use, for calling ministers to account before an ecclesiastical Council; and various publick documents show, that they themselves and other men of like spirit began soon after to feel the necessity of further and more effectual provisions, and proceeded distinctly to propose them. But the provisions of the Platform, and those afterwards proposed are disregarded, and by most men forgotten.

The defects of the system which actually prevails relative to the discipline of ministers are too palpable to escape notice, or to need particular explanation. We have, in the first place, no effectual means of keeping corrupt or incompetent men from entering into the ministry and obtaining ordination. Suppose the friends of ecclesiastical order are sometimes admitted to a place in ordaining councils. What influence can they have, when there is a majority in number, determined to outvote them? The rights of conscience, which they think it their duty to exercise, are assaulted, and they are, of a truth, expected to take it for granted, as a self-evident proposition, that the candidate for the sacred office is well qualified, and to give their voice for his ordination, without being indulged with an opportunity even of *seeking* satisfaction as to his fitness for the work.

After a man is once ordained, by whomsoever, and by what means soever it may have been done, we are all required to acknowledge and treat him as a minister of the gospel. If we are stationed in his vicinity, we are exposed to special difficulty. For while we are deprived of any influence in his settlement, and are utterly unable in any way to impeach his character, or bring him to trial for any fault, however flagrant, we are, according to common expectation, to have fellowship with him more frequently and in a higher degree, than others. Things proceeding in this way, a corrupt church with an heretical minister, has opportunity to exert a corrupting influence upon the whole body of Congregational churches. The great evil here complained of is at present protected, and suffered to spread, without any effort for its cure.

Heretofore it was the opinion of some in this Commonwealth, that a minister might be brought for trial before his own church. But it is very apparent, and is now almost universally conceded that a single church is not a competent tribunal for the trial of a minister. This has become so extremely evident, that whatever opinions may have been entertained, no church does really claim and exercise the right of censuring a pastor. So that we do in fact find ourselves in this difficulty, that we

have no regular, acknowledged and uniform method of trying a minister for any violation of the laws of Christ.

It is, then, of the highest moment, that a proper and effectual plan be adopted to regulate our conduct in this respect. At present, if ministers or churches refuse to hold fellowship with any one invested with the sacred office, however bad his character, they must do it on their own private responsibility, and generally to their own inconvenience. Now for this matter to be left entirely to the discretion of individuals is a great evil. For in such a case, they will be under the strongest temptations to swerve from the path of duty. And even if they are disposed to be faithful, it is probable that, by different judgments and different measures, they will embarrass each other, and increase the confusion of our ecclesiastical concerns.

It may be supposed, that the want of a regular tribunal for the trial of a minister may be supplied, and that most of the evils above insisted on may be cured, by the *provision of mutual councils*.

On this we remark, that no objection in our view can lie against the *grand principle* of mutual councils. Of the justice and importance of that principle we are fully convinced. And we wish it to be remembered, that the observations we are about to make relate, not to the *propriety* of mutual councils, but merely to the present mode of constituting them. The result, to which an attentive observation of facts, and a careful inquiry into the nature of the subject have conducted us, is this; viz. that *mutual councils, as they are now commonly constituted, are by no means an adequate provision against the evils which urgently call for a remedy*.

The general reasons of this result are the following.

1. *Mutual councils, in their present form, are not permanent bodies.* To-day they exist, and are by the churches invested with authority; to-morrow, both their authority and existence cease. Accordingly it is impossible for them to exercise any stated and continued inspection over either ministers or churches. Such occasional, transient bodies, however useful they may sometimes be in composing particular disturbances, can afford no regular and permanent support to the friends of religious order, or do any thing effectually to restrain offenders.

2. *Mutual councils, in present circumstances, may be evaded.* Offenders may refuse to join in the choice of them, or to submit to their decisions.

3. *Mutual councils have in this Commonwealth no code of ecclesiastical rules to govern either their own proceedings, or the conduct of contending parties in managing their cause.* Nor is it determined among our churches in what cases councils are to be called, nor what is the extent of their jurisdiction, or the authority of their results.

4. *Mutual councils, on the present plan, may be multiplied without limits.* Difficulties may be so managed, that there shall be no end of strife.

An *ex parte* council, resorted to as a substitute for a mutual council, is still more exceptionable. It will, from the very nature of the case, be regarded with suspicion, and can never have the power of terminating a contention. A second *ex parte* council may be called to contravene the decision of the first, and so on without end.

5. *Mutual councils, at present, are constituted in a manner extremely unfavourable to impartiality, justice, and unanimity; so that there is but little prospect of a decision which will give satisfaction to the parties.* Councils are chosen in a time of contention, when the minds of all concerned are liable to irritation, if not to bitterness. And what is more, they are chosen by the contending parties, and the offender, however exceptionable his character, and however flagrant his crimes, has an equal influence in constituting the tribunal with the other party. Doubtless he will make it his object to select men, who will be his particular friends and advocates, not those who will be judicious and impartial. Who can suppose that a council, so constituted, will be candid and thorough in their deliberations? Or how can it be expected that their decision will bear such marks of wisdom and integrity, as to prevent suspicion, and lead to an end of the controversy? As circumstances are, it is by no means strange, that a trial before a mutual council is frequently nothing but a scene of animosity and strife, in which the parties, aided by two divisions of the council, come forward to contend for victory.

The evil here complained of is like that which would be felt by civil society, if courts of justice, instead of being permanent bodies, organized in a manner wisely calculated to exclude all injustice and respect of persons, should depend for their existence and continuance, on the will of disagreeing parties, and so should in fact be the offspring of self-interest, dishonesty, and strife. In the establishment and form of courts of criminal jurisprudence, we should deem it totally inadmissible, that either the accused or the accuser should have any immediate agency. We adhere to the same equitable principle in the discipline which is exercised by a church over its own members. An offender must stand for trial before the church,—a body which has a permanent existence, and is wholly independent of his will. What mischief would be occasioned by giving him the right of choosing one half of those who should constitute a tribunal for his trial, even if he should be confined in his choice to members of the church. But the door is at present open for all these evils and many more, when offending ministers are to be tried, or difficulties arising between churches are to be brought before an ecclesiastical council.

The foregoing are the principal evils, which this committee deem it important to notice. Who does not lament their existence, and look with earnest desire for the time of their removal? Happy will it be for our churches, if, by a wise reflection on their own history from the beginning, and on events which are constantly taking place, they shall be able, through divine assistance, to obtain a remedy for the disorders which have so long afflicted them, and rise to christian purity, love, and order.

It would be unreasonable to expect, that evils, so deep-rooted and numerous, can be removed at once. But we feel a persuasion that the time has arrived for important improvements. We indulge a pleasing hope, that measures may now be commenced, which will vindicate the rights of the churches, contribute at once to a sensible melioration of our state, and effect, gradually indeed, but surely, the cure of our various disorders.

With these views, and in pursuance of an object so momentous; your Committee beg leave to submit to the consideration of this General Association the following

PLAN OF ECCLESIASTICAL ORDER.

There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all: and believers in Christ are all of one family, one brother-hood, one glorious and holy fellowship. Though this general fellowship, by the appointment of the adorable Head, and for great and wise purposes, is divided into particular sections; yet this arrangement is not intended to sever the unity of the Spirit, or to abate the sentiment, or hinder the exercise of mutual and extensive charity and communion: but as the individual members of each particular church are united in one body; so the particular churches should all be united in one federative and well ordered community. The vital principle of ecclesiastical order, discipline, and government is the pure spirit of generous brotherly love. It is to a defect of this spirit, that the lamented disorders, which have long abounded in our churches, and brought reproach upon Congregationalism, are chiefly to be imputed. Let this spirit become duly prevalent, and the interior discipline of the particular churches will be easy and effective, and their exterior order, in relation one to another, will be unembarrassed and irreproachable; the faithful word of the gospel will be held forth in its native purity and effulgence; and our Zion will become "beautiful as Tirzah, comely as Jerusalem, and terrible as an army with banners."

As however, the unity, order, peace and prosperity of a particular church is produced, preserved, and promoted, by means of an explicit covenant, formed on the principles of the gospel; so the unity, order, peace and prosperity of the great federative community of churches should in like manner, be procured, preserved and promoted, by an explicit agreement, or compact, formed on the same benign and holy principles. Something of this sort is scarcely less obviously suitable and requisite for the fellowship of the several churches, one with another, than for the mutual fellowship of the individual members in a particular church. Such an agreement or compact would constitute properly a Consociation of the churches. And such a Consociation the Platform of our churches decidedly favours; the principles for it were explicitly set forth, in distinct Propositions, adopted by the venerable Synod, composed of the elders and messengers of the churches, and holden at Boston in the year 1662. The Propositions, here referred to, are the following, which were given as a brief answer to this question, Whether according to the word of God there ought to be a Consociation of churches, and what should be the manner of it?

I. Every church, or particular congregation of visible saints in gospel-order, being furnished with a Presbytery, at least with a teaching elder, and walking together in truth and peace, hath received from the Lord Jesus full power and authority ecclesiastical within itself regularly to administer all the ordinances of Christ, and is not under any other ecclesiastical jurisdiction whatsoever. For to such a church Christ

hath given the keys of the kingdom of heaven, that, what they bind or loose on earth shall be bound or loosed in heaven, Mat. xvi. 19, and xviii. 17, 18. Elders are ordained in every Church, Acts xiv. 23; Tit. i. 5, and are therein authorized officially to administer in the word, prayer, sacraments and censures, Mat. xxviii. 19, 20; Acts vi. 4; 1 Cor. iv. 1, and v. 4, 12; Acts xx. 28; 1 Tim. v. 17, and iii. 5.—The reprovng of the church of Corinth and of the Asian churches severally imports they had power each of them within themselves, to reform the abuses that were amongst them, 1 Cor. v.; Rev. ii. 14, 20. Hence it follows that consociation of churches is not to hinder the exercise of this power, but by counsel from the word of God to direct and strengthen the same upon all just occasions.

II. The churches of Christ do stand in a sisterly relation each to other, Cant. viii. 8; being united in the same faith and order, Eph. iv. 5; Col. ii. 5, to walk by the same rule, Phil. iii. 16, in the exercise of the same ordinances for the same ends, Eph. iv. 11—13; 1 Cor. xvi. 1, under one and the same political head, the Lord Jesus Christ, Eph. i, 22, 23; and iv. 5; Rev. ii. 1; which union infers a communion suitable thereunto.

III. Communion of churches is the faithful improvement of the gifts of Christ bestowed upon them for his service and glory, and their mutual good and edification, according to capacity and opportunity, 1 Pet. iv. 10, 11; 1 Cor. xiv. 4, 7, and x. 24; 1 Cor. iii. 21, 22; Cant. viii. 9; Rom. i. 15; Gal. vi. 10.

IV. Acts of communion of churches are such as these :

1. Hearty care and prayer one for another, 2 Cor. xi. 28; Cant. viii. 8; Rom. i. 9; Col. i. 9; Eph. vi. 18.

2. To afford relief by communication of their gifts in temporal or spiritual necessities, Rom. xv. 26, 27; Acts xi. 22, 29; 2 Cor. viii. 1, 4, 14.

3. To maintain unity and peace by giving account one to another of their publick actions, when it is orderly desired, Acts xi. 2—4, 18; Josh. xxii. 13, 21, 30; 1 Cor. x. 32; and to strengthen one another in their regular administrations; as in special by a concurrent testimony against persons justly censured, Acts xv. 41, and xvi. 4, 5; 2 Tim. iv. 15; 2 Thess. iii. 14.

4. To seek and to accept help from and give help unto each other.

1. In case of divisions and contentions whereby the peace of any church is disturbed, Acts xv. 2.

2. In matters of more than ordinary importance, Prov. xxiv. 16, and xv. 22, as ordination, translation, and deposition of elders and such like, 1 Tim. v. 22.

3. In doubtful and difficult questions and controversies, doctrinal or practical, that may arise; Acts xv. 2, 6.

4. For the rectifying mal-administrations, and healing of errors and scandals, that are unhealed among themselves, 3 John, ver. 9, 10; 2 Cor. ii. 6, 11; 1 Cor. xv.; Rev. ii. 14—16; 2 Cor. xii. 20, 21, and xiii. 2. Churches *now* have need of like help as well as churches then. Christ's care is still for whole churches as well as for particular persons; and Apostles being now ceased, there remains the duty of brotherly love, and mutual care and helpfulness incumbent on churches, especially elders for that end.

5. In love and faithfulness to take notice of the troubles and difficulties, errors and scandals of another church, and to administer help (when the case manifestly calls for it) though they should so neglect their own good and duty as not to seek it, *Exod. xxiii. 4, 5; Prov. xxiv. 11, 12.*

6. To admonish one another when there is need and cause for it, and after due means with patience used, to withdraw from a church or peccant party therein, obstinately persisting in error or scandal, as in the Platform of discipline, (chap. 5, sect. 2, particularly 3,) is more at large declared, *Gal. ii. 11, 14; 2 Thess. iii. 6; Rom. xvi. 17.*

V. Consociation of churches is their mutual and solemn agreement to exercise communion in such acts, as aforesaid, amongst themselves, with special reference to those churches, which by providence are planted in a convenient vicinity, though with liberty reserved without offence, to make use of others, as the nature of the case, or the advantage of opportunity may lead thereunto.

VI. The churches of Christ in this country having so good opportunity for it, it is meet to be commended to them, as their duty thus to consociate. For 1. Communion of churches being commanded, and consociation being but an agreement to practise it, this must needs be a duty also, *Psal. cxix. 106; Nehem. x. 28, 29.*

2. Paul an Apostle sought with much labour the conference, concurrence and right hand of fellowship of other Apostles; and ordinary elders and churches have not less need each of other, to prevent their running in vain, *Gal. ii. 2, 6, 9.*

3. Those general scripture rules teaching the need and use of counsel and help in weighty cases, concern all societies and politicks, ecclesiastical as well as civil, *Prov. xi. 14, and xv. 22, and xx. 18, and xxiv. 6; Eccl. iv. 9, 10, 12.*

4. The pattern in *Acts xv.* holds forth a warrant for councils, which may be greater or lesser as the matter shall require.

5. Concurrence and communion of churches in gospel times is not obscurely held forth in *Isa. xix. 23—25; Zeph. iii. 9; 1 Cor. xi. 16, and xiv. 32, 36.*

6. There hath constantly been in these churches a profession of communion in giving the right hand of fellowship at the gathering of churches, and ordination of elders; which importeth a consociation, and obligeth to the practice thereof. Without which we should also want an expedient and sufficient cure for emergent church difficulties and differences; with the want whereof our way is charged, but unjustly, if this part of the doctrine thereof were duly practised.

The principles of these Propositions are genuinely Congregational, and perfectly coincident, and for substance, identical with those of the Platform. The Propositions, indeed, were framed and adopted by those venerable Fathers of our churches, by whom, only fourteen years before, the Platform was formed and adopted, and for the very purpose of carrying the design of the Platform into more complete and salutary effect. They are therefore especially suitable to be adopted as the general basis of an actual Consociation, as a Consociation founded upon them, and consistent with them, can be no innovation; but a recurrence to first principles, a restoration of our churches to their primitive order, and a guarantee to them of their original rights, liberties, and privileges. To carry these principles into good effect, nothing

more seems necessary, than for the churches explicitly to adopt, and duly to put in practice the following articles of Agreement.

Art. 1. The Propositions of the Synod of 1662, recited in the foregoing preamble, are acknowledged as the general basis of Consociation; and as declaratory of the rights and privileges guarantied to the churches; of the duties which they owe to each other, and of the purposes for which they are consociated. It will therefore be understood that it will not be competent to the Consociation "to hinder the exercise of the power" delegated by Christ to each particular church in regard to its own interior administrations and concerns, "but by counsel from the word of God to direct and strengthen the same upon all just occasions:" and especially to direct and strengthen that holy fellowship which the holy churches, as churches, are to maintain and exercise one towards another.

Art. 2. Particular Consociations shall be formed within such limits as may be deemed most convenient and expedient. But though it may be the duty of every church to join in Consociation, and to do what it can to promote the great design of general fellowship and order; yet no church can rightfully be considered or treated as belonging to a consociation without its own voluntary consent, or restrained from regularly withdrawing itself from a consociation whenever it shall see fit to withdraw.

Art. 3. Of the churches comprised in each particular Consociation, the pastors, and lay delegates, will meet annually, and oftener as shall be agreed upon, or as special occasion may require; attend to any business which may regularly come before them, and upon such religious exercises as shall be judged expedient; and allow freedom of conference, in the spirit of charity and order, upon subjects relating to the welfare of the churches.

Art. 4. Each particular Consociation will have a Moderator and a Scribe chosen annually, and to continue in office until others are chosen; and such other officers as shall be deemed requisite.

Art. 5. Although in order to general union and harmony, this instrument is to be the constitution of all the Consociations to be comprized in the General body; yet it will be competent for each Consociation to adopt, for the regulation of its own proceedings, and for the direction and benefit of the churches in regard to their consociated state, such rules and prescripts not repugnant to this constitution, as it shall judge advisable.

Art. 6. With a view to prevent the animosities, difficulties, and disorders, which have too often been experienced, in regard to councils, on occasions of dissensions and strife, and to preserve and promote that holy and pleasant fellowship, which is the primary object of consociation, and which should be sought with the most heedful attention, and the most tender care; the consociated churches with their pastors, agree to regard and use the Particular Consociation to which they belong, as the proper Council, made mutual by this agreement, as to all parties concerned, to be applied to by the churches and individuals in the connexion, in all cases, in which the advice and assistance of a council is requisite. Particularly do they agree to hold this as the proper body to hear and decide upon any complaint or allegation, touching ministerial character, against any minister belonging to it; to acquit, or to find guilty—to advise, sustain, or depose, as the case

may require.—It is to be understood, however, that any Particular Consociation may provide, upon principles and for reasons distinctly to be made known by them for cases, in which it may not be expedient for all the members to be concerned, as also for cases in which it may be proper for others, not of its body, to be admitted to sit in the council.

Art. 7. Any regular application from a church, for the advice or assistance of the Consociation, shall receive kind and prompt attention. An application from an individual, or individuals, will also be kindly attended to, though not without the most guarded respect to the rights and privileges, the order and peace of the church or churches concerned.

Art. 8. A complaint against a minister may be regularly exhibited either by the church of which he is pastor, or by a brother minister of the Consociation: but no complaint or accusation shall be received, but “before two or three witnesses.”

Art. 9. In all cases, the judgment of the Consociation is to be regarded and treated with great respect by the churches; and if, in any case, a church after due time taken for consideration, see cause to dissent, the reasons for dissenting shall be clearly and in a Christian manner, stated in writing to the Consociation; and the Consociation, having deliberately, and in the spirit of meekness, considered the reasons, will act as the case may require; either reversing the former judgment; or, if it be affirmed, yet with charity and forbearance, either allowing the church quietly to act agreeably to its own ultimate judgment,—or reviewing the case in union with one or two neighbouring Consociations to be convened together, in whole or by delegation; or dealing with the church in the way of Christian admonition. But it is distinctly provided, that no consociated church shall be put out of communion, unless, after a first and second admonition duly administered, and after due time allowed for it to reform or to justify itself, it shall be solemnly and deliberately adjudged by the Consociation to have forfeited its rights as a sister church.

Art. 10. A church, or a minister, considering itself, or himself, as aggrieved, will have the right of an appeal from the Consociation, to two or three other Consociations, to be convened, as provided for, in the next preceding article. Private church members are not included in this article; because the cases of private members are cognizable by the Consociation, only in so far as the churches to which they belong are implicated.

This Committee would farther suggest to the General Association the propriety of the following recommendation; viz. that when two or more Consociations are formed, measures be taken to promote such an understanding and consultation between them as will secure, as far as possible, a coincidence and uniformity with regard to the exercise and discipline, and all their modes of proceeding in their respective connexions.

Signed,

per order,

JEDIDIAH MORSE, *Chairman.*

PREFACE.

TO THE REVEREND JOSEPH LYMAN, D. D.

MODERATOR OF A BODY, STYLING ITSELF "THE GENERAL ASSOCIATION
OF MASSACHUSETTS PROPER."

REVEREND SIR,

NO apology can be required for the liberty, which I take, of introducing your name to the publick in connexion with this solemn and interesting inquiry, because it appears by the proceedings of the association, of which you was moderator, that the subject of this essay was explicitly recommended to publick attention, with a very distinct intimation, that that body would proceed upon its own authority alone, to act definitively upon the subject at its next annual meeting. Unprecedented as may be this mode of legislation, in one of the most important concerns, which can affect society, it will appear to be the course contemplated by your learned and venerable association, by the following vote of that body, published by your order in the *Panoplist* of August last.

"Voted, to go into a free discussion of the subject of the following motion—'That the report of the committee appointed to inquire into the history of an original MS. document, &c. &c. be printed, and copies sent to the several associations in our connexion for the purpose of ascertaining the publick sentiments respecting the plan of ecclesi-

“astical order therein presented, and that *the subject be called up* at the next meeting of the general association.’
 “After discussion the motion was passed into a vote, and
 “Messrs. Morse, Codman, and Woods, appointed a committee for publishing the abovementioned report, with instructions to print it in connexion with the preceding
 “vote.”

It is obvious, that there is an appeal to the people on this topick, and it would be indecorous in them to disregard it. But although you, Sir, and your brethren of the association may comprehend fully the subject and ultimate bearings of that report, yet the above notice and vote will convey a very imperfect idea of it to the people at large, who have not the privilege of seeing the Panoplist.

I shall therefore take the liberty to state generally what you, Sir, know to be true, and what I shall prove such in the course of my inquiry, that this report contains a project no less solemn and important, than that of abolishing in whole the old constitution, under which the Congregational churches have prospered during the last one hundred and sixty years, and of substituting in its place, a new system of problematical merit in itself, and directly opposed to the constitution of this state, if not subversive of the rights and liberties of the Congregational churches.

If such an important measure had been by any serious Christians deemed necessary for the cause of Christianity, it is difficult to perceive any reasons why it should have been introduced in a manner so exceptionable. There has always existed a body in this state, of which you, Sir, and all your associates are members, familiar to the people, venerable from its antiquity, catholick in its organization, embracing all the Congregational clergy, and entitled to the respect of all congregationalists—the Convention of Congregational ministers. It does not readily occur to us, why a certain

portion of the Congregational clergy, in contempt of the known opinions of this ancient and venerable assembly, should propose an entire new code of ecclesiastical discipline of their own authority, unless it arises from the conviction, that such a measure would be, as it has been, rejected by that body.

The right of those, who think themselves more pure than their brethren, to separate, and form new associations, cannot be questioned ; nor shall we deny to them the pretext of all innovators, that of reforming, rather than changing ; but they must permit us to doubt the expediency as well as consistency of such conduct in men, whose professed object is union.

If the ancient councils of the church are to be considered as any authority, (as it seems much reliance is placed on some of their dogmas, in matters of faith,) it is to be regretted, that in this instance their example had not been followed. To them were invited prelates of all opinions, without distinction, unless when for fraudulent or ambitious purposes a selected council, like a packed jury, was summoned.

In what manner even your *partial* associations have been constituted we are not advised. Whether in violation of the constitution, the Church members alone have ventured to elect and instruct delegates on these weighty affairs, or whether the whole society, at meetings duly warned, deputed their pastors to represent them ; or whether, as some people have said, I hope untruly, the ministers alone have undertaken to form an association and to assume such powers, I am equally ignorant. It is however apparent by the vote above cited, that although you profess, Sir, to call for the publick sentiments, yet you restrict this appeal to the "several associations in your connexion." Whether

you think that *they alone* have a right to express any opinions or entertain any sentiments respecting it, or whether you consider the separation already effected, and the new Church already organized, we are not informed.

If your object be simply to form a new system of Church government for that limited portion of the congregational churches who are represented in your body, it is in effect and should be entitled "A scheme for effecting the secession of certain churches from the old Congregational church, and the establishment of a new form of church government for the seceders, under the title of the Massachusetts Grand Association."

You would do well to consider whether your plan will have the smallest practical operation. Whether it can restrain "heresy," prevent the settlement of "corrupt heretical ministers" protect the orthodox clergy from "slander" and promote "union" in the church; all which objects are professed by your committee.

If the courts of law cannot uphold you; if a restless advocate for religious freedom, a friend to the old independent form of government, should appeal from your consociation to a mutual council, and the offer of such council should be rejected; if he, with his associates, should then proceed to appoint an *ex parte* council, and they should recommend the dissolution of the compact between the minister and his parish, and if this man should have sufficient influence to procure a majority of the legal voters in the parish for a dismissal, and if in such a case the court should hold the pastor regularly dismissed, which they most unquestionably will do, what will become of the consociations?

They may thunder out their anathemas in vain. They will be like those which the Pope issued against Henry the VIII. the object of contempt and ridicule. Of what benefit then, reverend Sir, can be this attempt to in-

novate in the church ? Is it politick to discover the will, when it is morally certain, that you will not have the power to tyrannize ?

I confess to you, Sir, I can perceive in this measure only the germ of new and scandalous dissensions, afflictive and disgraceful to the Church of Christ. The old associations will be brought into constant collision with the new, and being sustained by truth, the constitution and the laws, they will inevitably triumph. However your devotees may be kept some time in ignorance, they will finally understand their rights, and on the first cause of offence they will fly off and appeal to the old associations.

I am happy in addressing this preface to a man whom I would fain believe, from his character, to be incapable of abetting the designs of the projectors of this scheme. However ardent you may be in the support of your principles, I cannot bring myself to think, that you would promote a measure inconsistent with the great principles of the constitution, subversive of the religious liberties of the people, and tending directly to the most dreadful anarchy in the Church.

A LAYMAN.

AN INQUIRY, &c.

IN pursuing the proposed inquiry, I shall principally address my remarks to Laymen, who constitute the great mass of society.

Whatever may be the benefits, or evils, of the proposed change, the layman must principally feel them. It is for the interest of the great body of the people, that all religious establishments are formed, and they ought to have for their object the happiness, temporal and eternal, of laymen. The Clergy are but the Angels or Ministers of God to make known and spread his revelations, and all the institutions of religion have respect rather to those who are to be taught, than those who are the teachers.

In this age, it will be readily admitted, that any project whose tendency is only to aggrandize the Clerical order, without promoting, in a correspondent degree, piety and virtue among the people, should be the object of distrust and jealousy.

Any system, which tends to restore those hierarchical establishments which were calculated to exalt the clergy, who ought only to be the instructors of their brethren, over the laity ; establishments, which retained the Christian world, for so many ages, in a state of servitude to the privileged orders of the Clergy ; must be injurious to true religion.

It cost the lives of some millions of men to vindicate the rights of conscience, and to free the Christian community from the shackles by which it had been so long restrained.

Experience has taught us, that no men abuse power more readily than Ecclesiasticks. It is probably owing even to their virtues in excess. Secluded in some degree by their functions from the common intercourse of the world, accustomed to consider their offices and doctrines of paramount importance, feeling an accountability to God, and therefore holding in small estimation the esteem and opinions of their fellow men ; yet, liable like other men to passions and frailties, from which their purity and principles cannot effectually guard them, they have in all ages mistaken, and from the constitution of human nature they probably will for ever continue to mistake, their own prejudices and opinions, their passions and even their vices, for inspiration and duty. Hence they have been often seen in the name of a just and benevolent God, and under the pretence of promoting the cause of true religion, to adopt such principles, and to exercise such intolerant and despotick powers, as no men, acting from less honourable motives, would have dared to attempt.

Yes. There are no crimes which can be compared to those, which a mistaken view of Religion has induced men to commit.

This truth, which every page of history for many centuries confirms, and which so far from derogating from the truth and weight of the Christian system, serves only to confirm it ; since it has successfully withstood these injuries of its friends, more fatal than those which its enemies could have inflicted : this important truth seems now to be generally acknowledged in the civilized world, and the effect of it has been to control as far as possible the power of the clergy, leaving to them only, undisturbed, their rightful province, that of Instructors and Teachers.

In this country the experiment has been fairly made. We have seen a body of Christian instructors, who have for

nearly two centuries, gone in and out before their people with no other power or influence, than what they have derived from the purity and sanctity of their lives, and the weight and importance of the doctrines which they taught.

Where is the man who will have the hardihood to say, that this people, (I allude to those portions of the country which have enjoyed a stated ministry ;) where is the man who will affirm, that the moral and religious habits of our country are not superiour to those of any nation in which the Clergy enjoy the dangerous powers which Dr. Morse, in his report, recommends the Clergy to seize and exercise ?

Shall we then, with all this experience in favour of our system, consent to exchange it for one, in which the most busy and intriguing, the restless, factious and ambitious among the clergy shall have a right to settle the articles of faith ; determine who shall, and who shall not be ordained, “ find guilty, sustain, and depose ?”

Such alarming powers are in fact proposed, not for adoption by the people, but for assumption by the New Massachusetts Association.

The legality of such an assumption is the principal object of my Inquiry. It is no less solemn a question, than whether on the most important of all subjects, the People *have, or have not any rights* ; or whether the clergy have a right to assume the power of dictating to them, not only in matters of faith and discipline, but in the election and deposition of their pastors.

I shall divide this essay into Chapters, for the more convenient examination of the various branches of the subject. CHAPTER 1st. *The principles and practice of our ancestors in this country on this subject.*

In Chapter 2d, I shall consider, what authority can be found for these extraordinary powers, this ecclesiastical jurisdiction proposed by Dr. Morse, in the history of the Early Church.

CHAPTER 3. *The professed motives for abolishing the Cambridge Platform, and substituting this coercive system in its place.*

CHAPTER 4. *The real but secret motives for this innovation.*

CHAPTER 5. *What are the rights of the People of Massachusetts with regard to Religious establishments, as fixed by the Constitution, and by Judicial decisions.*

CHAPTER I.

The Principles and Practice of our Ancestors on this Subject.

THE origin of Congregational, or, as they were at first called, Independent Churches, is too recent to admit of controversy. We have no occasion to resort to learned divines or doctors to settle this point. History has within this period too much certainty; there have been too many rival writers, and the documents are too well preserved, to leave any doubt upon so plain a question.

When the English Church was separated from the Romish communion, it retained all the features of the hierarchy, as to the external government of the Church.

The king at first claimed to be the Spiritual head, and exercised as oppressive and despotick a power as that which the successors of St. Peter had done. It is difficult to ascertain, with the aid of the best historians, and the authentick documents of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, whether this religious despotism, or the tyrannical

measures of the Tudor and Stuart families contributed most to the disturbances which convulsed Great Britain during those ages. It is however certain, that the ecclesiastical usurpations naturally co-operated with other oppressions in producing the civil wars, and were almost the sole cause of the glorious revolution in 1688.

The first efforts against the hierarchy were made by the Presbyterians. This sect, like most reformers, and innovators, did not content themselves with abolishing the hierarchy, but like the dissenters from the Romish Church, they were so much under the influence of their early prejudices, that they could form no ideas of tolerance in religion. They considered not only that truth must be single, but that the Church had an exclusive right to interpret the scriptures, and prescribe what is Truth, and how and what men should believe.

They adopted precisely the error which had led to all the usurpations of the Church of Rome. As the Church of England, at its separation from the Romish see, had presumptuously arrogated to itself all the powers of which it had stripped the Roman Pontiff, under pretence that they were unscriptural; so the Presbyterians, in their turn, who derived both their hostility to the hierarchy and their intolerant principles from the Scottish covenanters, insisted upon the same *Jus divinum* in favour of their upstart Presbytery, and imposed fetters as galling as Gregory the VIII. in the summit of his power, would have dared to impose.

But the English nation was in a state of ferment too great to submit to such servitude. They felt, as we now feel, that if they must be subjected in matters of conscience to human arrogance and power, they should prefer an authority more distant, more venerable by its antiquity, more learned, more impartial, than that of the Plebeian

Presbyters who had deposed the Prelates only to tyrannize in their stead.

A new sect arose, first under the name of Brownists; which denomination becoming unpopular, they assumed that of Independents, and when they emigrated to this country, they adopted the more unexceptionable and less odious name of Congregationalists.

That this sect were the founders of the Congregational Churches in New-England, will not be disputed. Their characters and principles are the theme of daily panegyrick, by the same persons who are now about to destroy that part of their fabrick which was most worthy of commendation, I mean the entire equality and independence of the Churches.

These sectaries, the founders of our Churches, denied all Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction. They maintained the perfect equality as well as independence of all the Churches. They had, at first, no associations of any kind. When the Church of England was restored, and they became again the subjects of persecution, they fled to this country, hoping they might find in the wilderness, what Europe would not afford them, an entire and absolute freedom of Religious opinion.

But it is not in human nature to be free from ambition, nor even to be consistent always with one's own principles. Among these strenuous asserters of Christian freedom, there soon arose, as there will ever arise, ambitious and intriguing divines. These persecuted men became persecutors, and their conduct towards the Quakers, in the early settlement of this country, is a blot which can never be effaced.

God of his infinite mercy grant, that we may not leave a blot of a still deeper dye, by the adoption of the proposed system, in direct opposition to the principles of our Church!

Soon after the settlement of our country, a synod, composed of clergy and laity, established, not a system of Church Government, for that their principles rejected, but an harmonious plan of settling differences in the Church. This is well known by the name of the Cambridge Platform; and so wisely and judiciously was it framed, that it has survived all our civil convulsions, our municipal and political revolutions. This plan bears no analogy to the different schemes of Ecclesiastical tyranny, which ambition and cunning have introduced, and which ignorance and superstition have permitted. Its authority is chiefly moral. It has scarcely any sanctions but sentiment and opinion. Its powers are purely advisory. It provides for a mutual council in case of differences between a pastor and his people. This is simply an arbitration justificatory, but not obligatory. It settles the point of *character*. It gives the Pastor a right to go, or the People to dismiss, without violating the proper duties and relations of Christians to each other. In case of a refusal of a mutual council, the party complaining may elect a council *ex parte*, that is, without the other. *The result* of this last council (for our ancestors were too jealous of power to call it a decree) is merely recommendatory. It dissolves no ties. It can impose no penalties. It can neither sustain or depose. Every thing is still referred back to the source of all power, the People of the Parish. If neither party should adopt the advice of the Council, it is a mere dead letter. For example,

If a Parish should have complained against a Pastor for heretical opinions, and the Council should decide them to be such, and therefore recommend a dismission, still, if the Parish should afterwards be converted to the opinions of the Pastor, or should be ashamed of their illiberality in prosecuting him, his Pastoral character and rights would be undisturbed.

This is the very complaint of the persecutors. "There is no inquisition, no coercive power; and how can a Church flourish if some of the pious men have no means of gratifying their passions against their personal enemies?" Such however is the present condition of our Churches. They are in every sense independent. No human power can change this system but by violence.

It ought not however to be denied, that there have been two attempts to upset this peaceable plan of Church government.

One by Dr. Mather and others in 1706, which was not suffered to go into effect, on account of its being deemed hostile to the liberties of the Church, as he himself admits; the other by Dr. Morse, a few years since, in the convention of ministers, which was thrown out, as I am told, with pretty strong expressions of general disgust. Not discouraged, this indefatigable man, with others, finding the convention of the whole clergy unfavourable to his views, has now called a Caucus of his own party, with the design of forcing or imposing upon the people, as I conceive, an entirely new form of Church government.

Before I proceed to consider this project, which is the subject of the third chapter, I will cite one or two among fifty authorities, to shew that my description of the sentiments of the Brownists, Independents, or Congregationalists, is correct.

In the British Encyclopedia, revised in this country, and reprinted by Dobson, we have the following account of the "Brownists."

"The whole power of admitting and excluding members, with the decision of all controversies, was lodged in the brotherhood. As the vote of the brotherhood made a man a minister, and gave him authority to preach the word and administer the sacraments, so the same power

could discharge him from the office, and reduce him to a mere layman again ; and as they maintained the bounds of a church to be no greater, than what could meet together in one place, and join in one communion, so the power of their officers was prescribed within these limits ; in a word, *every church* in a Brownist model is a body corporate, having full power to do every thing which the good of the society requires, without being accountable to any classis, synod, convocation, or other *jurisdiction whatever*." "Most of their discipline has been adopted by the Independents."

Indeed, I may add, they were in fact the same church, though they altered the name on account of Brown's apostasy.

The settlers at Plymouth were Brownists, as Dr. Belknap assures us in the life of Robinson, though for the aforesaid reason they altered the name. Dr. Mosheim's account of the Brownists essentially agrees with the authority above cited. The publisher of his works states expressly that the Brownists were the founders of New England.

But a much more perfect account of the religion of our ancestors may be found in the Encyclopedia ; title, Independents.

It is there stated, that Brown was the founder of the present sect of Congregationalists, though his system was softened by his successors, of whom the chief place is given to the venerable Robinson.

That pious man's definition of a Christian Church seems to settle the question, as to the legality or propriety of consociations with judicial powers, unless it is intended openly to renounce the Congregational principle. It is "*Coetum quemlibet particularem esse totam, integram, et perfectam ecclesiam ex suis partibus constantem immediate et Independentem (quoad alias ecclesias) sub ipso Christo*." "That every separate christian society is a whole, entire and per-

fect church, holding its authority (at least so far as respects other churches) immediately and independently from Christ himself."

The two following are said, by these impartial and orthodox editors, to be the distinguishing features of Congregationalism ; upon which we may exclaim, "How has the gold become dim ! !"

"1. The Independents reject the use of all creeds and confessions drawn up by fallible men, requiring of their teachers no other test of orthodoxy than a declaration of *their belief in the Gospel of Jesus*, and their adherence to the Scriptures as the rule of their faith."

This was written thirty years ago, probably by an English divine. It is a true representation of Congregationalism. At this day Dr. Porter, Mr. Channing and others, are abused for maintaining, what this learned work declares to be a distinguishing feature of Congregationalism.

The second distinctive tenet of Congregationalism is, "That they lay no stress upon the rite of ordination, according to the Episcopal or even Presbyterian forms. That a minister may be set apart and authorized to preach by any christian society."

Among the arguments, which this work recites, as used by the Congregationalists in favour of their principles, are the following, which are pertinent to our present question, and shew the unscriptural nature of Dr. Morse's new consociations. "That the word *ἐκκλησία* which we translate Church, is always used in scripture to signify either a single congregation, or the place (or building) where a single congregation meets." Sundry texts in support of this construction are then cited, and the writer proceeds to say, "Besides these, the Independents can find no other description of a church in the New Testament ; not a trace of a diocese or Presbytery consisting of several congregations subject to one jurisdiction."

“The number of disciples in Jerusalem was very great, before they were dispersed by the persecution, in which St. Paul bore so great a part, yet they are never mentioned as forming distinct assemblies, but as *one* assembly meeting in *one* place. After the dispersion, as they could never meet in *one* place, they are never called a church, or one church, but the churches of Judea, &c. Hence the Independent concludes, that in Jerusalem, church and congregation were of the same import.” In the same manner the work from which these quotations are made, proceeds to adduce the arguments of the Independents against all separate power in the elders, as distinct from the people of the congregation, and against all jurisdiction of one or more churches over each other. The arguments are very satisfactory, to which our readers are referred. It is sufficient for our purpose that we have performed what we undertook, viz. to shew, what were the principles of our ancestors in this country, the early and true Congregationalists, on this subject of Church government.

It has been proved, that the essence of Congregationalism is the perfect independence of each separate church, and the denial of any judicial authority in any body beyond or without each separate society.

To say, that you wish to promote the prosperity of the church, meaning the Congregational Churches, by adopting such a consociation as is proposed, is as absurd as it would be to say, that you are in favour of civil liberty, and a Republican government, with a despotick hereditary emperour at its head, or of Protestantism, but under absolute submission to the see of Rome.

CHAPTER II.

The authority for these extraordinary powers and Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction, now claimed by Dr. Morse, to be found in the history of the Early Church.

I SHALL select as competent authority on this point, Dr. MOSHEIM, because no man will deny his orthodoxy, and few will be disposed to question his learning and impartiality. It is not expedient to embarrass our brethren of the laity with numerous quotations. It will be sufficient for their satisfaction, to cite one ecclesiastical historian of undoubted credit, who refers his readers to his authorities for every assertion.

Dr. Mosheim affirms, "that neither Christ himself, nor any of his Apostles, have commanded any thing clearly and expressly concerning the external form of the church, and the precise method according to which it should be governed. From this we may infer, that the *regulation of this was* in some measure to be accommodated to the times, and left to the wisdom of "the *chief rulers of the state and church.*" —See Mosheim's Ecclesiastical History, vol. i. p. 97.

If this proposition be true, there exists no authority in the state of Massachusetts, to establish any precise form of church government, or to give to any one church or number of churches authority over any single church. For our State rulers are expressly prohibited by the 3d article of the constitution from so doing, and as to "Chief Rulers" in the church, we have never had any in this state.

The *church* as a general term, embraces every sect of christians, whether Episcopalians, Congregationalists, Presbyterians, Baptists, Methodists, Universalists or Quakers; for our laws recognise all these sects expressly as equally members of the Christian church.

Does any man deny this proposition?

Let him consider, that, by our constitution, any man is exempted from attending, or paying towards the support of any minister of any one of the aforesaid persuasions, or sects, however regularly settled in his town, provided he cannot conscientiously attend upon his ministry, and provided there be any other minister of a different persuasion, on whose ministry he does attend. This is a constitutional provision which cannot be abrogated, and which proves the absolute equality of all Christian churches.*

To this catholick principle in our constitution and laws, there is but one exception, and that is contrary to the genius of our government, and still more so to the spirit of our religion, the exclusion of the Roman Catholics from the protection which others enjoy. That a Catholick should be obliged to support a Protestant teacher as well as his own, is a most grievous imposition.

But it may be said, that whatever the people, or the civil ruler may have done, the Scriptures are paramount to them all, and that the chief rulers of the church derive their authority from God.

It is for this reason I shall cite further passages from Dr. Mosheim, as to what the Scripture and apostolick usage have settled on these matters.

* In the case of Mr. Murray while at Gloucester, the supreme court held, that to entitle him to recover he must be a settled minister. But what that settlement must be, and that it does not require an ordination by any presbytery, nor the aid of any other churches in that ceremony, is plain by the case of Freeman and the wardens of King's Chapel, vs. Pelham. The Reverend Dr. Freeman was ordained in a manner truly apostolick. He was set apart for the ministry by the wardens of his own church, pursuant to a vote of the whole society. What an absurdity then, to talk of the absolute necessity of a Consociation to license ministers, to settle the mode of ordinations, and to exclude improper men from the ministry!!

In connexion with the above quotation, Dr. Mosheim proceeds to say, "If however it is true, that the Apostles acted by divine inspiration, and in conformity with the commands of their blessed master, and this no Christian can call in question; then it follows, that that form of government which the primitive Churches borrowed from that of Jerusalem, the first christian assembly established by the Apostles themselves, must be esteemed of divine authority. But from this it would be wrong to conclude, that such a form is immutable; for this a great variety of events might render impossible.

"In those early times, every Christian Church consisted of the people, their leaders and the ministers or deacons, and these indeed belong essentially to every religious society. The *People* were undoubtedly the first in authority, for the *Apostles* showed by their own example that nothing of moment was to be carried on or determined without the consent of the assembly; and such a method of proceeding was both prudent and necessary, in those critical times."

"It was therefore the assembly of the *People* which chose their own rulers and teachers, or received them by a free consent, when recommended by others." "The same *people* rejected or confirmed by their suffrages the laws proposed by their rulers to the assembly; excommunicated profligate and unworthy members of the Church, restored the penitent to their privileges, passed judgment upon the different subjects of controversy and dissension that arose in their community, examined and decided the disputes which happened between the elders and deacons, and, in a word, exercised all the authority which belongs to such as are invested with sovereign power."

See Mosheim, Vol. I. p. 97, 98.

Thus, according to an orthodox Doctor of the Church, the people were in the Apostolick days the sole depositaries of sovereign power in all Church matters. The reason he assigns for this deference to the People applies with more force now, and that is, "that the People purchased this privilege by supporting the teachers, the inferiour officers and the Poor."

But how principles and practices are changed since the days of the Apostles ! By imperceptible encroachments, the people in *some* countries have been stripped of all power ; and the teachers, who were originally subject to the People, have become their masters, and keep the whole religious community in absolute subjection. Our ancestors threw off this yoke and resumed their primitive authority, that which the Apostles gave or allowed to them.

Dr. Morse, out of pure love, as he pretends, to the Church, is now preparing to slip on this yoke again. The proposed plan of Consociation annihilates the power of the people, considered as distinct from the Church, at a stroke, they not being so much as mentioned from the beginning to the termination of it.

Dr. Mosheim does not leave this question here : in page 105 of the same volume he says, "*The Churches in those early times were entirely independent, none of them subject to any foreign jurisdiction, but each one governed by its own rules and own laws.* For though the churches founded by the Apostles had this particular deference shewn to them, that they were consulted in doubtful and difficult cases ; yet they had no juridical authority, no sort of supremacy, nor the least right to exact laws for them." Now indeed Dr. Morse's church, though not founded by an apostle that we have ever heard of, arrogates to itself the juridical authority, a supremacy over other churches, by adopting a new constitution, by which the whole legislative and judicial power is taken from each separate church, and given to

the Consociation. I shall consider hereafter the proposed assent of each church and *its illusory character*.

Our old and venerable Congregational system was precisely like that, which Dr. Mosheim says was appointed and practised upon by the Holy Apostles. It is this which they propose to destroy.

Dr. Mosheim adds, in the same paragraph, "Nothing is more evident than the perfect equality which reigned among the primitive churches; nor does there even appear the smallest trace of that Association of provincial churches, from which councils and metropolitans derive their origin." Mosheim, Vol. i. p. 105.

Until this learned orthodox divine shall have been confuted by those who procured the publication of his works here, we may assume it as a settled proposition, that in the apostolick age, *the People*, that is, the professing christians of every distinct church and society, enjoyed and exercised all ecclesiastical powers, even those of settling questions of faith and disputes in the church, as well as of electing and dismissing their teachers—that there were no associations of churches, no councils, no claim of judicial power or supremacy in any bodies of christians.

If, then, while the apostles were upon earth, who must be supposed to have best known the will of our Saviour and the purposes of God, no such jurisdiction was ever claimed, what pretence can now exist, that such dangerous powers should be confided to fallible and erring men, stimulated by passions, uncontrolled by apostolick authority, and unaided by divine inspiration? The arguments and reasons in favour of exact conformity and uniform discipline were infinitely stronger in the apostolick age than they are at the present day.

The Church was surrounded with able, learned and powerful foes, who were ready to seize upon any dissensions as

to matters of faith or discipline, in order to bring Christianity into discredit. There existed also in that age, an authority, to which an appeal might be made, entitled to the highest respect, viz. the Apostles themselves.

Yet these luminaries of the Church gave no encouragement to the erection of general tribunals for the correction of abuses, and for the establishment of uniform rules and discipline in the Church.

If we are asked, to what sort of connexion the apostles alluded, in the frequently repeated phrases of the "fellowship of the churches," we answer, an intercourse of kindness, of hospitality, of advice ; but more especially, in that age of persecution, of notice when dangers approached, and of generous aid when persecutions prevailed.

In fact a strict and intimate intercourse of the churches might have been at that time necessary, but has now become utterly useless.

In the present day, it is difficult to see any reason why one or more churches, in combination, should exercise an authority in matters of faith and discipline over other churches. We have no longer any enemies to encounter in the European or American world. The last madman, Paine, who attacked christianity, surely did not produce any effect which would require an intimate union of the churches. The whole civilized world professes to be Christian. It is to be sure divided into an hundred sects. There is no earthly tribunal to decide which is right. If you once depart from the scriptural and apostolick principle, that each church forms an whole, and has a right to interpret the scriptures for itself, it is difficult to see any point at which you can stop, short of an universal head, the authority claimed by the Bishop of Rome. Shall we, the Independents, be ready to admit the authority of the Archbishops and convocations of Great Britain ? And if we are,

will the Baptists admit the infallibility of our Consociations ? Or will even the haughty Presbyters, though they join the orthodox in denouncing those who differ from them as hereticks, will they submit to Dr. Morse's Consociation ?

The only pretence for these tribunals is, the Papal or Romish one of conformity. But such conformity can in this case reach but one sect, the Congregationalists. The others will still go on in what we call their errors. It is not therefore the church of Christ which these gentlemen would reform and render uniform. It is a single sect ; and the only consequence would be to break that sect into two or more divisions, without effecting the object at which they aim. I trust that these reverend gentlemen are not so far gone, as to contend, that the Congregationalists alone are the church of Christ ; and that they will admit some few of the other sects to a small participation in the blessings of the gospel.

This however is not the place to press these considerations. My object in this chapter was simply to shew, as I believe I have done, that the early church admitted of none of these combinations, associations, or consociations to measure, restrain, and limit faith ; and to forge and invent causes of heresy, and of confusion and controversy, in the church. I have cited but one authority, but that is orthodox, and venerable, and published and circulated in this country by the very authors of this system, which Dr. Mosheim declares to have been unknown in the apostolick age.

If we are asked, where is the evil of such conspiracies, combinations and consociations, even if not authorized by the example of the apostles ? I answer, first, that if they are not authorized by scripture or by law, there ought to be historical and practical proofs of their utility, otherwise they ought not to be adopted.

But, 2dly. That all such associations and assumptions of power have invariably terminated in the most detestable of

all despotisms. They are in their nature an oligarchy, or government of the few. As their power is ill-founded, it can be preserved only by violence. These considerations will be more fully developed in the following pages.

CHAPTER III.

The avowed motives of the professed change from Congregationalism to Consociationism, (if I may be allowed to coin a new word for a new thing.)

It could not be expected, that learned Divines would propose an entire revolution in the church, without bringing to their aid all the talents and learning of their party. It accordingly appears, that this great body had this topic under consideration for a year, and committed it to some of their most skilful scribes, to invent and digest arguments for such an innovation. We are authorised to suppose, therefore, that Dr. Morse's report contains their strongest reasons in favour of this measure: this we shall now proceed to examine.

The first remark to which this report gives rise, is the consciousness of its authors, that it could not stand upon its own merits. A manuscript of Dr. Cotton Mather is brought forward with as much parade, as if he had been an apostle. This so exceedingly resembles the monastick artifices of the dark ages, of hunting up the barbarous productions of some canonized saint, to authorize some new usurpation, or add sanctions to some ancient ones, which were not respectable in themselves, that it excites our jealousy, if not our contempt.

If our church government be in itself so radically defective, as this committee pretend, if it be that rotten, misera-

ble, and ineffectual system, which they would shew it to be, if these evils have been perceived from the days of Dr. Cotton Mather to the present time, the fact must be too well known to all the Christian societies, to require Dr. Mather's authority in support of it.

If these defects were not so generally known, and were perceptible only to the enlightened members of this association, still, if they exist, they must be susceptible of demonstration, and the duty of the committee was rather to state, and prove them, than to rely on this obsolete authority.

But the greatest difficulty is, that we can perceive no grounds for this unlimited deference to Dr. Mather. He was respectable for a very credulous age, and he partook, as largely as any man, of the imperfection of the times. But what authority ought such a man to enjoy, in a state of society, in which his works can scarcely be read without a smile at his weakness and prejudices? We have nearly one hundred times as many learned men at present, as there were in that period.

The second remark we would make on this document, which seems to be the citadel of the revolutionists, is, that the opinion of Dr. Cotton Mather, according to his own confession, had no weight with his *contemporaries*. It is true, we have the assertion of Dr. Morse, (and it is the only authority given for it,) that the convention of ministers approved the project. By what majority, and with what limitations or amendments, we are not told. It would be very much to the discredit of the convention, if it were true; and this the committee cannot deny, because they tell us, "*the proposals were such as no congregational minister could consistently recommend.*" This is no great praise to that convention.

But as one hundred years have elapsed, and Dr. Mather's project has slept as soundly as himself, it became necessary to account for this silence, and thus it is feebly and haltingly admitted by the committee, "that there were some considerable persons among the ministers, and the laity, who thought the liberties of *particular churches* to be endangered by them. In deference to these, the proposals were never prosecuted beyond the bounds of *mere proposals*." In other words, they died a natural death. They were rejected with indignation by the clergy and laity, in 1706. This fact we have from Dr. Cotton Mather himself, in a work published twenty years afterwards.

What does this ancient precedent prove? That some men had the temerity to propose the abolition, (for it was such in effect) of the congregational form of government, and that it was rejected as fatal to the liberties of the church.

But never was any body of men so unfortunate in the choice of a committee, as our association. Not content with bringing forward a case, which, as far as it has any authority, goes to the destruction of their own principles, they make the most dreadful mistakes in the management of this unlucky case. In page 360 of the *Panoplist*, vol. xi. they say, "that the proposals of Dr. Mather are in *various respects* such, as that in their opinion, congregational ministers cannot *consistently recommend or approve* them."

This would seem to a layman, to be a *coup de grace*, a fatal blow both to Dr. Mather, and the convention which adopted his plan. It is to be regretted, that the committee had not stated the parts of Dr. Mather's project, which appeared to them so exceptionable; perhaps we should have deemed them the most meritorious.

But it is singular, we must all confess, that so much deference should be paid to a project, which the committee are constrained to censure in such severe terms.

In the next page the committee say, that they cannot determine on what grounds the proposals were rejected, and seem rather to be surprised at their hard fate. This is a little strange, and somewhat contradictory in the view of a layman.

It would occur to us as probable, that some “of the various objections which rendered it impossible for a congregational minister either to recommend or approve them,” might be presumed to have occasioned their failure.

Now we appeal to all rational men, and request them to ask themselves, why this plan of Dr. Cotton Mather, so treated by the people in his *own* age, utterly neglected since, and finally so condemned by this committee, should be made the chief foundation for this new experiment, and should occupy two thirds of their report? Surely the committee will experience the fate denounced on those who build their *houses on the sand*. It is, in brief, presumed by the committee, that a project which had no countenance in the age in which it was produced, nor with the many generations which have succeeded it, will acquire an importance and influence from its antiquity, which its merit could not secure for it, and that we shall be disposed to adopt a plan of ecclesiastical tyranny, which our ancestors rejected with disdain.

The arguments of the committee, independent of Dr. Mather’s rejected authority, may be divided into three classes, all of which we shall minutely consider.

1st. “General, loose, declamatory assumptions, or assertions, vague, indefinite, and in many cases incomprehensible.” In other terms, *Panoplist language and argument*.

2d. Three specifick objections to the present plan of church government.

3dly. Scriptural arguments, taken from Dr. Increase* Mather's *Ratio Disciplinæ*.

As to the first, "The loose, declamatory assertions."

They are of the character of those which follow. "That there is a visible decline in the order, discipline, and fruitfulness of the churches." This complaint, they admit, was the prevailing one also in 1706, one hundred and ten years since, and has been the prevailing one with certain men, in all ages of the church. It is like the usual complaint against the seasons, the scarcity of money, and the general profligacy of the age in which we live. What peculiar evidence, or proofs the committee have on this point, we know not. We are persuaded of the contrary. This part of our country is unquestionably as correct in its morals, more disposed to support publick worship, and as well inclined to attend the exercises of religion, to respect and honour its ministers, and to promote all publick institutions for the advancement and spread of Christianity, as it has been in any former age.

The clergy are much more learned and respected than they were a century ago. The affectation of external sanctity has, it is true, given place to more natural and less pharisaical and assuming manners. Men think they can be pious without being hypocritical.

There is, in short, all the difference between this country now and at that period, that will be found in Great Britain, between that nation under Praise God Barebones' Parliament, and that same people printing and dispersing as they now do, the Holy Scriptures in one Hundred Tongues. Then to be sure, a Surplice was a subject of Horrour, and a Form of Prayer, a Liturgy, "a damned work of Satan." Now we see a churchman and dissenter, an archbishop and ruling elder, combining their efforts, without dissensions or

* Should be Cotton Mather.

difficulties, to spread the glad tidings of the Gospel throughout the habitable globe.

The second general complaint is,

“That in the introduction, discipline, and dismissal of ministers, the Churches are left each to its own discretion, without any acknowledged uniform rule to govern them.”

And pray is this an evil? Is it unreasonable, that those who support, and are bound to hear a preacher, should have a voice, and the only voice in introducing him? Is it just cause of complaint, that those who look up to their pastor as the greatest earthly blessing, who wait anxiously for him to soothe their sorrows, and strengthen their hearts on the bed of sickness, who look up to him as the guide of themselves and their children, in the narrow path to heaven—ought it to be a subject of complaint, that such a man, who is to be united to them for life, should be the object of their choice, and that their preference should not be disturbed by some rival priests, who should insist upon his subscribing to their articles of faith?

Yet this is one of the main articles of complaint. It is as unreasonable and preposterous, as if these gentlemen should assume to the Church the power of deciding who should or should not intermarry in private life.

The power thus claimed by Dr. Morse of interfering, either with the settlement or dismissal of a minister, we have shewn in our first chapter, was not suggested in the Apostolick age, and in the second, we made it equally apparent, that such a power was rejected and denied by the Congregational Churches.

The Committee then call the attention of the publick most solemnly “*to the evils which affect Churches and ministers in their publick character and in their relation to each other.*”

As it has been seen, that in the Apostolick age there were no relations between one Church and another, except

those which exist between all Christians, those of kindness and urbanity, we should have expected on this head to see some elucidation of these relations and duties, as well as the manner in which they had been broken and disregarded. We look in vain. The Consociation Cause will not admit of precision, or palpable and obvious facts and statements. We have indeed much commonplace declamation, such as, "that all Churches are members of one kingdom, subject to one king, partakers of one spirit, and enlisted in the same cause, and are frequently called to promote the same interest." We are even pretty audaciously, and if any other persons were concerned, I should say pretty impiously told, that the relation existing among Churches was constituted by God himself !

Let us examine this rhapsody which the Committee have substituted for argument. All Christendom, that is, all who believe in the Christian dispensation, belong to one spiritual kingdom, are subject to one king, and partakers of one spirit; Catholick and protestant, episcopalian and dissenter, are equally the subjects of the foregoing remarks, unless the Committee contend that the Church of England, and the Baptists and Catholicks are not Christians, and are therefore not subjects of the same king. If then these terms or phrases have any bearing (and they have but very little, for in our judgment they are mere sounds without meaning) but if they have any bearing, they go to prove the necessity of a perfect *conformity in all sects*. They draw the inference, that there should be but one Church, and one form of government for all the Christian world.

This is precisely the Roman Catholick doctrine. If one or more churches convened as in Council, Synod or Consociation have a right to settle matters of faith; if there be any human power since the Apostolick age competent to this, the pretensions of the Bishop of Rome are beyond all

limits of comparison the first. They have prescription and antiquity, and numbers on their side. They have been admitted by the Christian world, for six or seven times the number of ages that the protestant form of religion has existed. There are *plausible* grounds in scripture for his authority. There are *solid* ones in favour of submission to one despot rather than to many. The distance of his residence, his independence, his consequent impartiality, his freedom from those petty rivalships and personal passions, from which the best men more nearly in contact are not exempt, these, and a thousand other reasons, give his claim a preference to those of any human tribunal. Let it not be pretended, that I am an advocate for the authority of the see of Rome. I deny *all* ecclesiastical jurisdiction. I think conscientiously, that it is the most monstrous and wicked of all usurpations. It is sinning against all light, to assume the smallest control over the consciences of men under colour of scriptural authority. The whole scriptures are against it, and we shall see presently on what wretched foundation these pretensions repose.

If it be said, that our ancestors, the first Independents, in direct opposition to their own principles, exercised a full share of spiritual tyranny, I answer, this is a truth ever to be lamented. I was never among the admirers of our forefathers without qualification. They had indeed great virtues, but they had also great defects. And there is not a man among those who praise them, that would exchange the present state of society, for that of this country in the first century of its settlement.

Reformation is never perfect at once. Some of our weaknesses will still adhere to us, but, blessed be the God of all mercy, he has permitted us to enjoy a degree of light and liberty which our ancestors never knew, when the true spirit of the first reformation, and the better and more per-

fect principles of the second, that of the Independents, are about to have their full operation. Such an operation they will have, in the entire freedom of the separate churches, and in an universal Catholick spirit, unless it shall be disturbed by ecclesiastical tribunals ; which have, in all ages, been the bane of Christianity.

I shall now proceed to consider secondly,

The three specifick reasons, assigned by the learned committee, for abolishing the Cambridge Platform and establishing a coercive ecclesiastical court.

The first is, “a prevailing neglect of discipline towards offending members of churches, and a difficulty of going through a regular course of discipline when attempted.”

It is difficult to perceive, in what manner the proposed consociations will strengthen the power of separate churches over their own members.

It is alleged, indeed, that every church to this end requires the aid of sister churches. This is broad assertion. The only means of discipline in the power of the church, in a free country, are admonition, penance, and excommunication. These a single church can effectually exercise, or inflict, as well without as with the aid of associated churches. Indeed much better, because there is no appeal.

Something is intimated of the delinquents obtaining support from other churches. This also is mere declamation.

Why state chimerical fears ? Is it a practical evil of any extent ? Did any church ever expel a member for lewdness, or intemperance, or profanity, and has the excluded member been received and encouraged by a sister church ?

We believe, and trust, never. It is a mere pretence. But if it be intended, as it would seem, to erect these consociations to try the lay brethren who offend, if they are to examine into and decide spiritual offences, they will have labour and reward enough.

Connecticut will find a new and profitable employment for her numerous sons, and we shall be thronged with a host of theological lawyers, eager to prove their zeal and ingenuity against the reprobate citizens of Massachusetts.

This is no sneer. It is sober conviction. When we see it gravely and seriously urged, that the churches have not sufficient power to enforce ecclesiastical discipline, that a great and general court of ministers must be called to try laymen, and to punish them for heresies and other sins, we own we should shudder, if we did not believe, that the good sense and temper of our people would induce them to spurn at such a suggestion. Yet such an one is *made*, as will be seen by the prefixed report.

The second specifick objection to the old Platform is, "that there is no regular and acknowledged method in which Congregational churches can exercise a christian watch and care over each other."

"A Christian church, it is added, may *apostatize* from the common faith, and fall into disorders totally incompatible with the christian character."

Now this is very plausible to vulgar ears, but what does it mean? Is there any standard to decide *who does apostatize*? What is the common faith? Is it the faith of Roman Catholicks, or of Lutherans, or Calvinists, or Independents, or Methodists, or Baptists?

And who is to decide when a whole church *has* apostatized? And what the effect of such a decision? Who has the keys of heaven, now they are wrested from St. Peter? In what part of scripture is this power given to Dr. Morse's consociated churches, or any other self-formed ecclesiastical tribunal?

Let these gentlemen shew us one instance of consociation in the scriptures. We shall prove hereafter there are none.

Suppose this plan in operation. A case of alleged heresy is brought before this august tribunal. The members are precisely divided. Which side is right? Is the truth in doubt? What is the remedy? Call in one or two other consociations, say the committee; that is, multiply the means of confusion and discord, and you will obtain peace and truth. The new body is torn by like dissensions. What then are you to do? Appeal to the Grand Association of Massachusetts. But suppose the Grand Association should decide the case, and the refractory church should refuse to submit, what is the next measure? To withhold communion. This any separate church can *now* do, and often undertakes to do, without any other authority, than its own natural powers and rights.

This obliges me to notice a very extraordinary assertion of this committee, that for a *single* church to refuse to hold communion with another "is offering violence to decorum;" "that if a single church should refuse to hold fellowship, it would tend to introduce ecclesiastical despotism and anarchy."

What! have we forgotten the memorable case of Mr. Codman, a man of excellent feelings, but who has been, we regret to say it, induced to join this high ecclesiastical party? Was *he* guilty of "introducing despotism and anarchy?"

That gentleman was persuaded to withhold communion with many associated churches, against the will of a majority of his people. An ecclesiastical council was called. A full hearing was had, and all the orthodox clergy on the trial declared, that he had a *right* so to do.

Will it be said, that refusing to exchange with his brethren of the same association was not throwing them out of communion? It not only necessarily includes that power, but much more. It includes the right to deprive the people of his charge of their accustomed privileges.

Acts of fellowship of churches are, assisting in case of the sickness, death, or absence of a pastor, at ordinations, and in councils. Surely it is ludicrous to say, that you still hold communion and fellowship with a church, when you will not permit its pastor to perform the ordinary services of the desk, and refuse him admission to your pulpit.

The decision of the orthodox part of the council in that memorable case, has proved, that the Cambridge Platform needs no amendment on this ground, since *every* pastor has the power *against the will* of his *own people* to *withhold fellowship* with any, and all other churches, at his pleasure.

The third specifick objection of the committee to the old system of government is,

“The want of a settled effectual method of calling ministers to account for immorality and error, and of protecting them against calumny and injustice.”

This reason will be found, on examination, to be as little availing as either of the others.

The only persons, who have any interest or right to call a pastor to account, are his own parishioners.

It would be preposterous to suppose, that any parish would be so corrupt as to retain a clergyman notorious for his immorality. If such a case could be supposed, any church, in connexion with such a reprobate society, would be fully justified in withdrawing from any communion with it. As to errors, if they are such as to give offence to his own flock, there is *now* a competent remedy.

The parties aggrieved have a right to insist on a mutual council. If the members of such council are divided, the equitable presumption is, that it is *no error*; or if any, of an immaterial nature.

If either party refuses to unite in a council, the party complaining has a right to call an *ex parte* council, the result of which is so far obligatory, that the party who conceives

itself benefited by it, may legally act in conformity to it, and will be upheld by the courts of law.

But the learned committee, aware of the perfect nature of the present remedy, have endeavoured to render mutual councils, and the present mode of trial, odious and contemptible.

"We have," say they, "no effectual mode of keeping improper men out of the ministry." This is a departure from the question, which was, not whether improper men could be kept out, but whether they could be punished after they were admitted. But this complaint is as idle as the other. No man, by the platform, can be ordained without the approbation of a council. It is true, the parish settling a minister, may send to whatever churches it chooses. But is not this a natural privilege, and are not the powers and rights of all churches, once regularly gathered, equal?

But, says Dr. Morse, "*the friends of ecclesiastical order* are often in the *minority* at ordinations, what can they then do?" So it would seem that the *minority* are to govern, provided they are the true saints. "What influence," the committee dolefully inquire, "what influence can they have in an ordaining council, when there is a majority determined to outvote them?"

We answer, the same which the minority always have in civil affairs. They must submit and be modest enough to wait until the minds of men shall change. This, the committee will not do. It would seem therefore, that this project is to give the minority, in certain districts, a right to control the majority. This is indeed either an ingenuous or unguarded confession, fully displaying the extent and objects of this project.

Let us now hear the legal objections to the present admirable system of mutual councils.

The committee premise, "that no objection can arise in their view to the *grand principle of mutual councils*, of

the *justice* and *importance* of that principle they are fully convinced."

This appears to us one of those extraordinary subtleties, which ought to have vanished with the pupils at St. Omers.

To be in favour of a "Grand principle, and convinced of its justice and importance," and yet proceed to decry it as absurd, irrelevant, weak, and ridiculous, is what a layman cannot comprehend.

It is not to *mutual councils*, say the committee, we object, but to the *mode* of *constituting* them ! Now the *mode* of constituting them is what renders them *mutual*, and contains their only merit.

We beg the reader not to laugh indiscreetly, when we state the mode in which *mutual councils* are proposed to be improved.

The consociation is, by a standing covenant, which may endure for several centuries, to be constituted the council, and is therefore to be *called mutual* ! ! Thus, according to the same reasoning, the Supreme Court is a *mutual* tribunal, though one party is always forced there against his consent, it is an arbitration, because by the compact, called the constitution, that tribunal was provided, and therefore the Judges are *mutually* chosen ! To such subtleties do these gentlemen descend.

Our notions of mutual councils are very different ; they are in effect references or arbitrations. Their merit or value consists in their having the direct confidence and assent of the parties. If, in questions of property, references are sometimes liable to objections, they seem, in ecclesiastical affairs, to be the only remedy which the principles of our religion admit. They are a *peace-making tribunal in their character*. Theology, and religious controversies, which seem to repel forensick accuracy, require a more popular mode of decision ; it is therefore highly proper that friends should be called in to heal the breach without scandal to

the church. The objections to them, urged by the committee, are derogatory to our clergy. They would prove, that the ministers of religion are at this day as violent, as unjust, as partial, as they were in the worst ages of the church, or as the worst men in society: that they will sacrifice their consciences and their God to their party views. Heaven forbid, that Dr. Morse's picture of them should bear any resemblance to the original. We think it a calumny, and we fully believe, that in mutual councils most clergymen will dare to be honest in spite of the strongest of all prejudices, those of religious sects.

But our principal reply to this objection is, In what manner will consociations remedy this evil? Will there be no party or sectarian prejudices within those tribunals? Will the same class of men, who are represented as so partial in mutual councils, become perfectly fair as soon as they are convened in consociations?

Or—(for here we probe this gangrened wound to the bottom,)—is it expected and intended, that the consociations shall consist *only* of men of *one mode of thinking*? The whole argument of the committee proceeds on this presumption.

The *first* specifick objection to mutual councils, which the committee urge, is, “that they are not permanent bodies.” This is *their excellence*. Referees are not permanent bodies, but they are the only fit tribunal for all cases affecting honour, character, conscience, and which involve those equitable considerations which the law cannot reach. Make an ecclesiastical tribunal permanent, and all history assures us, that whether it be a college of cardinals, or a kirk, a court of high commission, or an apostolick office, an inquisition or a presbytery, it will be a despotism.

The reason is very simple. The codes and rules of such tribunals must be so vague, they must depend so much on that erring guide, the conscience; are capable of so little

precision, and withal have so powerful, yet deceptive a pretext for zeal, as the promotion of the *will* of God, which every zealot construes to be his *own* will, that they always have, and always must, terminate in tyranny. Heaven forbid, that we should any of us, live to see the day in which the Reverend author of this report, or any other Reverend Doctor should be promoted to a *permanent* seat in a *permanent* body, with the powers they propose to assume, to wit, "To exercise stated and continued inspection over ministers and churches, to prevent ordination when they see fit, to bring lay brethren to account, and to try, depose and for ever disqualify ministers whom they may decide to be offenders in morals or faith."

This is all—!! my brethren, and it does not much exceed the enormous powers claimed by the worst ecclesiastical tyrants which the dark ages produced————

The *second* alleged objection against mutual councils is, "that they may be evaded by the offender's refusal to join in the choice of them or to submit to their decisions."

This is partly evasive and partly untrue. If an offender refuses to join in choosing a mutual council, the remedy by *ex parte* council is open and perfect. This portion of the objection is therefore evasive.

If he does join in choosing a mutual council, it is untrue that he can successfully resist its decisions. The other party can force him to submit to them, if such other party be a parish, by dismissing the pastor; if a pastor, by suing for and recovering his salary.

3d. Objection. "Mutual councils," say the committee, "have no code to govern their proceedings." Nor have referees; yet the latter mode of trial has existed for a thousand years, and is still a favourite one. But what occasion is there for codes and rules and legal forms, when six or eight clergymen assemble to heal a breach in the church of Christ? Did St. Paul send any code of rules to

the Romans or Corinthians, or is there any pretence that there were proctors, or doctors, or any canon law among the early churches? We know there were none.

Fourthly. It is objected, that "Mutual councils may be multiplied without number." We have only to say, this is not the fact. If they may sometimes be divided, so too may a jury, so will be often this proposed sovereign remedy, the Consociations, if they are fairly and honourably composed. It is impossible men should always agree on religious subjects, unless it shall please God to shower down more of his gracious spirit than any divines now possess. There are now probably several hundred open avowed sects, and several thousand various and discordant opinions.

Lastly, It is objected, that "mutual councils are constituted in a manner unfavourable to impartiality, to unanimity and justice, and not calculated to give satisfaction to the parties."

We admit they are unfavourable to unanimity, and while christians see but as through a glass darkly, this is an excellence; for there never can be unanimity in our present state of knowledge, without improper coercion. As to justice and impartiality, we think the old councils are calculated to be the fairest possible tribunals.

With regard to their tendency to give satisfaction, we doubt whether if the offender should concur with the consociation in doctrine, the parish who should complain would be better satisfied with the new tribunals than with mutual councils. If for example, Dr. Morse's parish should gather sufficient courage to insist on his doing justice to Miss Adams, or should complain of his occupations in book-making, and creed-making, as inconsistent with his parochial duties, we doubt whether they would be better satisfied to submit the case to an orthodox consociation, than to have a voice in the choice of judges.

In a word, we admit that the consociation would be more uniform, more vigilant, more severe; we have no doubt they would have code upon code so voluminous, that none but the adepts could understand them; but as to justice and impartiality, they would never be considered as welcome guests, whenever sectarian questions and prejudices should interfere. While we have no doubt, that Channing and Thacher, *cum multis aliis*, would be struck off the list of christian pastors as "corrupt and heretical," Dr. Morse, upon complaint, would be acquitted of all censure, and it would be decided, that his conduct to Miss Adams had been marked by christian charity and tenderness, that his refusal to abide by the award of referees had been dictated by justice and honour, that his character was truly apostolick, and that they hoped he would inherit a crown of glory, and take his seat between St. Peter and St. Paul.

It is on this subject, that the committee of the grand association undertake to run a parallel between the proceedings at common law, and those under the canon law in this state. They say the evil in the churches is as great under the Cambridge Platform, as it would be in society if the courts of law were like mutual councils, temporary bodies. They ask "what mischiefs would ensue if the criminal in common life had the right to choose his judges?" And is it come to this? Is it avowed by these reverend divines, that ministers are to be put on a footing with cut throats and pickpockets, and shoplifters? Are ecclesiastical offences of the same deep moral dye as those which courts of criminal jurisdiction are empowered to restrain and punish? Are any of our clergy charged with such enormous crimes? It is new to us.

If not, if the offences charged on them are only errors, *however great*, errors only in opinion, is there not a material distinction in the nature of the offence and the urgency of the remedy?

The parallel is a strange and illiberal one. In what respect will the consociations resemble the supreme judicial court? How will they remedy the present defects? Are they, like the courts of law, appointed by one head? Are they independent in their salaries and in their tenure of office? Not so.—They are the mere creatures of the choice of every parish, however ignorant or well informed, and are often chosen by small majorities.

No, if we must alter the Platform in order to accommodate these gentlemen with a permanent and stable body like the courts of law, let us render the resemblance perfect—let us have some tolerable security and chance of talents and impartiality. Let us have a court for ecclesiastical cases, composed of three laymen and two clerks. Let them be appointed by the executive, and removeable on address of the Legislature. But to give Mr. Codman's little parish an equal voice in deciding upon Mr. Channing's orthodoxy with his own, which is three times as large, is preposterous, unequal, and of course, unjust. Yet such is the scheme recommended for our adoption.

Let us now consider the third ground taken by the committee, in favour of these consociations or ecclesiastical courts, which is the authority of Scripture. Though a layman, I presume I can read and judge of the meaning of a plain text as well as another.

Surely if consociations and ecclesiastical tribunals were intended to be established by Christ or his apostles, they would have been directed in plain terms, subject to no cavil; and if the committee have cited no texts but such as are equivocal, it is a proof, that they are attempting to wrest the scriptures to the furtherance of their own views.

The first proposition is "that each church hath within itself full power to administer all the ordinances, and is not under any ecclesiastical jurisdiction whatever."

These are the words of the committee. We agree to it. It is the very corner-stone of Congregationalism; but how it could be cited in favour of a most enormous ecclesiastical usurpation, we cannot conceive.

Secondly. It is asserted, that "Churches do stand in a sisterly relation to each other, being united in the same faith and order." This is not denied. They owe each other assistance in calamity, in case of sickness or death of the pastor, in exchanging labours of love; at ordinations, dedications, and other like cases. But does it result from this that they have any judicial authority over each other, and if so, to what extent? The only texts cited are,

Ephesians, iv. 5. There is "one Lord, one faith, one baptism." This gives no authority. If it does, it goes to support the Church of Rome in obliging all churches to conform to her faith, a faith that has fifteen hundred years support, and has been embraced by three fourths of all Christendom. If you dissent from her "*one faith*" it must be on the ground, that though in truth there can be but one faith, yet each separate church must decide for itself what that faith is. There is no middle course.

The second text is Philippians, iii. 16.* "Let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing." Where so little attention is paid to accuracy, it is perhaps useless to remark, that *Griesbach* has rejected from this text the words "Rule," and some others in this passage. If, however, the received text be admitted, it must mean, Let us walk by the rule of the gospel. Churches should endeavour to agree in this rule, but it can never be intended that the

* Philippians, iii. 16. *Griesbach* rejects from the text *καὶ οὕτως, ὡς αὐτοὶ φερόμεν*. The improved Version translates it, "However, as far as we have reached, let us walk therein."

majority should settle *definitively what that rule is*. If they can, the reformation was an unjustifiable, unscriptural, wicked thing. If any number of churches can settle the rule, then the Roman Catholick, the oldest and most numerous, had a right to fix the creed for all the christian world.

The next text is Ephesians, iv. 11 and 13. "And he gave some prophets, some apostles, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers."—"Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ."

What man in his sober senses, not intent on building up a system, can see a foundation for consociations with power to settle the faith, accept, admit, sustain and depose pastors in all this passage? Surely it is not pretended, that the Consociators are apostles or prophets. What is their authority then from this text? The thirteenth verse relates not to the churches, but to the great body of the disciples. They are said to come, or a wish is expressed, that they *may* come, to unity of faith. But there is no intimation, that even the evangelists or apostles had authority to settle that faith for the whole church, in any *other* way, than by respectful advice, and interpretation. Indeed it will appear, that each of the apostles settled the faith for himself, without reference to any common standard.

The third proposition of the committee is, "that communion of churches is the faithful improvement of the gifts of Christ bestowed on them for his service and glory."—Nobody disputes this. It is therefore useless to examine the quotations. The question is still open, to what extent does this communion reach, and what are the authorities of the united body?

The fourth proposition is "Acts of communion are such as these."

1st. "Hearty prayer and care for one another." As to prayer, this is conceded ; but as to *care*, if it be meant care of their souls, and regulation of each others' faith, we deny it, and proceed to examine the pretended authority for it.

2 Corinthians xi. 23. "Besides those things which are without, that which cometh on me daily, the *care of all the churches.*"

There are the words of St. Paul, when enumerating his labours and sufferings for the cause of Christ. He was an apostle sent to preach the gospel by Christ himself, converted to the christian faith by a miracle, endued with supernatural gifts, able therefore to guide the consciences of all christians. Now if this Committee have these gifts, perhaps they may be entitled to the *care of all the churches.* But it is as absurd, to infer from the authority delegated to, or exercised by St. Paul, that the same powers have devolved upon the Middlesex or Norfolk clergy, as it would be, that because the Apostles raised men from the dead, they also could do the same.

The next quotation is still more absurd, 1. Rom. i. 9.* "For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers." This was also the language of the same apostle, but there is not a *colour of foundation* for an ecclesiastical tribunal in these words, and I doubt whether these orthodox gentlemen perform honestly, what the apostle conscientiously did, whether they are always mindful of us hereticks in their prayers. At any rate let them confine themselves to *THAT* exercise, which we admit is both lawful and expedient.

The 2nd duty or act of communion is, to "afford relief by communion of temporal and *spiritual* necessities."

* See Archbishop Newcome's translation of Rom. i. 9. in the Improved Version.

As to temporal necessities, we are all agreed, that they ought to be relieved, and so also spiritual wants, so far as we have above defined them, the obligation to relieve them is unquestionable.

We doubt however whether it be a christian duty to call a brother a heretick, or to judge him without reason.

The citation from Romans xv. 26 27.* relates only to pecuniary aid. That from Acts xi. 22, 26. merely shews that when those who had been dispersed and scattered by persecution began to assemble, the Christians at Jerusalem sent a missionary to comfort and confirm them.

The quotation from 2^d Corinthians viii. 1, 4, 14. relates solely to the *pecuniary* assistance furnished to the brethren at Jerusalem by the church of Macedonia.

The 3d act of communion is alleged to be "to maintain unity and peace by giving an account one to another of their publick actions."

This authority, if founded in scripture, would certainly go very far to maintain the right claimed by this committee; but it is truly painful to see clergymen thus distort and misrepresent the holy scriptures.

No where is this duty of giving an account to any body, as to a superiour tribunal, enforced in the sacred writings.

Many acts of fellowship, which were both expedient and necessary in the early ages of the church, have long since ceased to be so.

The Church was then encompassed with enemies: It was shaken by persecution. The closest bonds of union were necessary. These motives have now ceased to exist. Let us examine the only authority for this accountability of one church to another as to its publick actions.

* The Jews having made the Gentiles "partakers of *spiritual things*" refers to the "oracles of God" having been preserved by the former, &c. &c.

It is taken from Acts xi. 2, 4, 18. The case was simply this. The Jewish christians were offended with Peter for associating with, and preaching to the Gentiles. They called him to account for it. Peter, unwilling to lose his influence with the Jews, and wishing to quiet their tender consciences, gave them a history of his miraculous vision, and of the command he had received to preach to the Gentiles. But did Peter admit the right of the Church to call him to an account? Does this case prove the *expediency* of such an interference? It is a most unfortunate example for the Consociation; for in that case the whole church at Jerusalem, probably as competent as the Massachusetts General Association, did undertake to call an apostle to account, when they were *clearly in the wrong themselves*. This shews the danger and presumption of the interference of fallible men in matters of this nature. That they cannot comprehend the whole counsel of God, and ought not to judge each other. Was Peter right in preaching to the Gentiles? Then the church were wrong in calling him to account. Peter, it is true, gave them satisfaction, not as a matter of right but of expedience.

How dangerous would be this power in a church not better informed than the first church at Jerusalem, when we have no longer an apostle to correct their mistakes!!!

I have thus shewn, by a very brief analysis, on what slender grounds reposes this assumed authority of judging the Churches. I could extend the same inquiry to the few remaining texts, but I trust I have done enough, by producing the most prominent. There is no middle course, as I have already had occasion to remark, between the admission of the full extent of ecclesiastical dominion claimed by the Romish see, and the entire liberty of each separate church.

CHAPTER IV.

The real motives of the proposed change or subversion of the Congregational mode of government, and of the substitution of the Consociations in its place.

WE have seen, that the *avowed* motives for such a change are either too loose and declamatory, or too trifling and unfounded to be the true ones. Yet as men do not embark in such attempts, which involve so much labour and wear of conscience, without strong inducements, it behoves us to inquire what these must be.

If one was disposed to be sententious, we might say, that we fear that neither the love of God, or of one's neighbour, neither a wish to promote the spread of christianity, or a desire of union among the churches, were the prevailing motives with the prime movers of this scheme, but that they may be resolved into two passions, envy, and the love of power.

We are happy, that this charge does not extend to many persons. There is no evidence that the association in general approve of these propositions.

The project of the committee is a vast, and bold one.— It aims at the overthrow of principles and usages which have been settled for nearly two centuries. It is a retrograde measure, from the principles of the reformation, to the tyrannical doctrines of the fifteenth century. It is the signal for new, and perhaps even bloody contentions in the church. It is ushered in under the most unfavourable auspices. Never was the Church more quiet than before the publication of this plan. Never was an harmony more delightful to christians than that which lately prevailed. Every sect, and every christian enjoys the right in peace,

to read and interpret the scriptures, according to the light which God has given them. Since the apostolick age such a privilege has never before been enjoyed in any quarter of the globe. Why disturb this harmony? Why deface and distort this delightful picture? it is said that the church is teeming with errors and corruptions. If you listen to the committee, you would suppose that christian America exhibited a chaos, in which vices and errors were predominant. But is this so? or is it a calumny against our age and country? What corrupt clergymen have been settled? What partial, prejudiced councils have been holden?—In what instances have the doors of one church been opened to the outcasts of another? It is said, incompetent men get into the ministry. It is supposed the committee mean into Congregational societies. Let us have the cases. Who are they, and in what parishes? Perhaps it will be seen, that the most able and competent men are, in the *views of the committee*, incompetent.

Much complaint is made too, of the decay of piety. This might be granted safely, without attributing it to any defect in the government of the Church. Morals may change from a thousand causes exterior to, and foreign from the Church. To prove that the Church is in fault, it should be shewn, that there has been corruption or partiality in the Courts established by the ancient Platform, or that abuses remained unredressed after the most effectual measures had been taken to remedy them. We now challenge the committee, Messrs. Woods, Codman, and Morse, to state the cases, and the parishes in which these evils have occurred, what measures they or others have taken to redress them, and in what instances they have proved ineffectual. Upon doing this, we pledge ourselves to reply to the specifick cases. If they are right, we will acknowledge our error; if wrong, we will prove them so.

This however, be assured, fellow-citizens, they will never do. The facts are against them, and they prefer to rest under the shelter of broad assertion.

But why this delicacy in stating the whole truth? Why not avow, that the complaint is, that Mr. Burr could not compel his whole parish to hear him after he had changed his opinions?

The real difficulty is, not that the mode of trial is not a good one, but that it is one, which is not wholly under the control of these people. As the power at present is such, that a minority can protect themselves against an overbearing and violent majority by insisting on mutual councils, as this minority have dared to breathe *in whispers* their opinions, they must be put down. There must be but one sentiment, and Dr. Morse's, and Dr. Worcester's reading must be the gauge of that opinion. Thus, for example, Boston for fifty years has nourished, may I say, has honoured and loved and revered men whom *they* call a sect of hereticks, its Chaunceys, and Mayhews, and Clarkes, and Belknaps, and many others enumerated in the eloquent letter of President Adams to Dr. Morse, and she must now be both purified and punished. Unhappily for the violent, these men have been uncommonly learned and able. Another passion has been excited. Those must be silenced who could not be answered. Hence human learning has been decried, and the University, the nurse of this detested literature, must be rendered odious.

The true motives of this change are to counteract those whom they please to call hereticks; that is, those who are as learned, as able, and as liberal as themselves. This, I presume, not an honest man of the orthodox party will deny. He will not, to his conscience, whatever he may say to the world. The means of effecting their object, is to get possession of ecclesiastical power, to coerce, intimidate, and

finally expel the minority, and thus to overawe, if not command that citadel of learning and religion, our University, the best and highest object of reverence and affection in our country.

If it be asked, in what manner, and by what course of proceedings these designs are to be accomplished, we answer, by the exercise of the powers granted to the proposed Consociations, so often attempted to be established in the early periods of our history, but as often defeated by the prudence and proper jealousy of the lay part of the community.

If any number of churches can be persuaded to enter into these consociations, they expect to fix them for ever in a state of thralldom. Thus, suppose Dr. Morse's, or any other church, could be persuaded to join this new establishment; upon the pastor's decease, no man can be permitted to preach in such church upon probation, unless approved by the consociation. The people of the parish are to have no vote on that question in the first instance. Nobody can be admitted into such a church, till approved by the consociation.

If any number of the parishioners should know of a respectable candidate, and should insist upon hearing him against the will of the church, and should vote to settle him, the consociation to which the church has attached itself, may refuse him ordination. The parish will have no right to call in such churches as they may prefer. They are to be bound down for ever to the consociation as the superiour tribunal.

Such we say are the objects of this new plan. It is true, the courts of law can, and will restrain them, but this does not alter the nature of the project.

In like manner, if a clergyman now settled in any church which may join the consociations, should in the prosecution of his studies change any of his opinions, with the perfect approbation, both of his church and people, it will be competent to any minister of the consociation to cite him as a *criminal* to answer for his heretical opinions, and upon trial he may be deposed from the ministerial office and dismissed from his parish. There are no limits prescribed to the extent of these consociations. Wherever the liberal clergy are now a majority, the consociators may, by enlarging the limits of the consociations, outvote them, and make them a minority.

Thus it would be in the power of a small majority in the whole state, to control and displace the minority.

It is hoped also, that the authority and influence of these great consociations will, by degrees, so far overawe the churches which may not join them in the first instance, as to give them an opportunity of filling up any vacancies with clergymen devoted to their views.

It is, in short, an organized, affiliated association for the purpose of rooting out all ministers who will not subscribe to the creed of the authors of this plan.

CHAPTER V.

What are the rights of the Members of Congregational Societies, as recognized by the Constitution and Judicial decisions of this State?

IN examining this branch of the subject, it is immaterial what powers church members formerly usurped, or what authority ecclesiastical bodies anciently assumed. The

existing law must alone govern, and that law can only be pronounced by the highest judicial authorities. As the ecclesiastical power stood at the adoption of the constitution, so it must for ever remain, until that constitution shall be altered or amended.

The *church* is now placed, as it ought to be in all countries, especially those which are free, in a situation distinct from the other members of a parish, having no authority over any but its own members, possessing no voice in the choice or deposition of a pastor, nor any control over his opinions or mode of preaching, greater than other members of the same parish or society enjoy.

That such is the law of the land, fully, finally and perfectly settled, that the contract between a minister and his parish is purely civil, and that no ecclesiastical body has, or can have a right to interfere between them, except in the mode pointed out by the Cambridge Platform, will be abundantly proved by the following decisions of the Supreme Judicial Court.

In the case of *Avery vs. Tyringham*, 3 Massachusetts Term Reports, the main question was, whether a town could dismiss a clergyman, without good cause, at its pleasure. The court decided that it could not, and in delivering the opinion of the Bench, Chief Justice Parsons added, “ This
“ article of the constitution (the 3d.) had without doubt
“ made some alteration in the ecclesiastical establishments
“ of the State. Under the colonial laws, the church mem-
“ bers in full communion had the exclusive right of elect-
“ ing and settling their minister, to whose support all the
“ inhabitants of the town were obliged to contribute.
“ Under the colony charter, no man could be a freeman
“ unless he was a church member until 1662, and a ma-
“ jority of the church constituted a majority of the legal vo-

" ters of the town. After that time, inhabitants not church
 " members, if freeholders, and having certain other quali-
 " fications, might be admitted to the rights of freemen.—
 " In consequence of this a different method of settling a
 " minister was adopted under the Provincial charter.—
 " The church made the election and sent their proceedings
 " to the town for their approbation. If the town approv-
 " ed the election, it also voted the salary and settlement.
 " When the candidate accepted, he was solemnly introduc-
 " ed to office by ordination, and became the settled minister,
 " entitled to his salary and settlement under the votes of the
 " town.

" If the town disapproved, and the church insisted on the
 " election, it might call an ecclesiastical council, and if the
 " council approved the election, the town was obliged to
 " maintain the person chosen as the settled minister of the
 " place; but if the council disapproved, the church must
 " have proceeded to a new election.

" By the *constitution* the rights of the town are *enlarg-*
 " *ed*, if it choose to exercise them, and those of the church
 " *impaired*.

" If the church, when their election has been disapprov-
 " ed by the town, shall unwisely refuse to make a new elec-
 " tion, *or if the town for any cause* shall abandon the an-
 " cient usages of the country in settling a minister, it *may*,
 " *without* or AGAINST the consent of the church, elect a
 " publick teacher and contract to support him."

The chief justice also, in direct contradiction to Dr.
 Morse and his committee, declared, that for immorality or
 even negligence there is now a competent remedy against
 the pastor. We have therefore the same stable and fixed tri-
 bunal in such cases, for which the committee appear to be
 so anxious, and a much more important one than that which
 they propose. He proceeds "There are also objections

“to a minister founded in questions of doctrine and discipline. In all these cases, the parties, if they cannot agree to dissolve the contract, may call to their assistance a council mutually chosen, and their advice, technically called *their result*, is so far of the nature of an award, that *either party conforming thereto* will be justified.”

This again contradicts all the assertions and reasoning of the committee, as to the imperfect nature of mutual councils.

“If, adds the late learned Judge, in a case proper for a mutual council, either party should unreasonably, or without good cause, refuse their concurrence to a mutual choice, the aggrieved party may choose an impartial council and *will be justified in conforming thereto*.

“Thus a *reasonable* tribunal is established to decide on all cases of difficulty and controversy between a minister and his people, a tribunal, founded in ancient usage, resorted to in practice, and probably in many cases, but certainly in one, in which I was council, supported by the opinion of all the Judges of the Supreme Judicial Court.”

Now in whom are we to place confidence as to the Laws of the land, in Dr. Morse, or the judges of the highest Courts of Law?

The former represents mutual councils as scenes of partiality and prejudice, incompetent, inconclusive, ineffectual. The latter say, they are founded in ancient usage, are venerable and effectual in their operations and results. In the case of Fuller vs. Inhabitants of Princeton, this last opinion was fully established.

In the case of Burr vs. Inhabitants of first parish in Sandwich, 9th Massachusetts Term Reports, the Chief Justice again recognizes this doctrine of the perfect competency of councils to afford relief; and in stronger terms.

“ The *Law* as applicable to the question before us, is not
 “ *disputed by either* of the parties. It is not denied, that
 “ in a proper case between a minister and his parish for
 “ the advice of an ecclesiastical council, if either party
 “ offer to the other such a council to be mutually cho-
 “ sen, and the other without sufficient cause refuse to join in
 “ the choice, the party offering may choose an ecclesiastical
 “ council, and the advice of the council so chosen, and act-
 “ ing fairly and honestly, will *justify either party* in adopt-
 “ ing their result.”

In the same cause, the Chief Justice said, “ Our ances-
 “ tors came to this country *smarting from the rod* of the
 “ hierarchy then in power in the country from which they
 “ emigrated. They were *hostile to any ecclesiastical co-*
 “ *ercive jurisdiction whatever* in all matters of doctrine
 “ and discipline, as *repugnant to the liberties of the*
 “ churches ; and although synods were holden, and councils
 “ of the churches convened, yet no compulsory authority
 “ was vested in them : and the utility of any ecclesiastical
 “ coercive power has been doubted, as tending to repress a
 “ free and liberal inquiry after truth, and to SUBSTITUTE
 “ FOR THE ERROURS OF HERESY, SOMETIMES QUESTIONA-
 “ BLE, the VICE of *hypocrisy, always censurable.*”

A more conclusive opinion on any judicial question was
 never promulgated, and surely none was ever expressed in
 language more elegant and forcible. If Chief Justice Par-
 sons had never written any opinions on other subjects,
 these alone would have rendered his memory dear to the
 friends of religious liberty. This is not extravagant, be-
 cause it is difficult to produce from any jurisprudent or phi-
 losopher opinions, more correct, or more simply and elegant-
 ly expressed.

Such then are the existing laws of Massachusetts with
 regard to the ecclesiastical power : A system of laws and

principles which cannot be changed without the consent of the whole people. From them it appears, that the whole and uncontrolled power of settling a minister is vested in the members of every parish, as distinct from the church, if they see fit to exercise it—That the only legal mode of removing a pastor is by a mutual council, or in case of refusal of the pastor to join in it, by an *ex parte* council.—That this remedy is ancient, venerable and recognized by our courts of law as absolute and binding—That there can be no other legal or constitutional ecclesiastical tribunal with coercive powers ; and that in the opinion of the court, such a jurisdiction as Dr. Morse now sets up, would be opposed to the principles of our ancestors, to the usages of the country, and to the rights and liberties of the people.

CONCLUSION, AND INFERENCES.

IF such be the law of Massachusetts, recognized by its highest judicial authority, in what manner can it be changed, except by an alteration of the constitution, or by the interference of the legislature ; a mode which is itself perhaps questionable ?

It would be injurious to these Reverend Gentlemen to presume, that they contemplate a measure, which shall have no other than a moral or honourable authority. It would be unworthy of the labour they have bestowed on it, if not a single order, or decree, or result, would have the smallest legal or practical force. This would, in fact, overthrow the only arguments in its favour, since the principal objections to our old and venerable system, consist in its inadequacy to effect its objects, and its want of coercive powers.

If, therefore, our judges understand the law, it is absolutely impracticable to give the smallest efficacy to the new system of ecclesiastical dominion : certainly it is so without the aid of the Legislature. It is hardly to be presumed that the Baptists, and Quakers, and Episcopalians in that body, will lend their aid, in giving force, and extension, and dominion to a sect, which is now the ruling one, and whose past measures cannot excite in them the most perfect confidence in its liberality.

Let us however, examine this question more nearly.

Suppose the Grand Association, after sounding, as they profess to do, the sentiments of the people by this publication, should proceed at their next general self-created assembly, to adopt Dr. Morse's report.

Among other powers, with which the Consociations are vested by this project, they are substituted in the place of mutual councils, and all the old ecclesiastical modes of trial and relief are repealed. The consociations are to be empowered "to hear and decide upon any complaint or allegation touching ministerial character, against any minister belonging to it, to acquit or find guilty, to *advise and sustain or depose*, as the case may require." Now we ask, suppose the grand association of ministers do as they propose, adopt this system ; will it bind their parishioners ? No.

Will it bind their churches ? No.

Will it bind even the members who are present and vote for it ? No.

A bargain or contract, in derogation of natural liberty and the rights of conscience, is void. But admit that this salutary principle of the common law does not here apply, which we think it does in the greatest force, still of what use will your new code be, if it does not bind the parish or the church ?

But it will be said, we are sensible of this, and we will have the consent both of parish and church.

Then you must have the *unanimous* consent, for it is one of the cases in which the majority cannot bind the minority. The laws of the land, and the principles of religious liberty, cannot be altered or abandoned, or surrendered by any majorities.

It is as if a parish were to vote to return to the British Crown, or to invite Bonaparte to accept a diadem. The minority could not be obliged by such votes.

But this is not all. The majority, who should vote for it, would not be bound by it. They might withdraw that approbation, *ad libitum*. A member of a parish or church could not bind the purchaser of his estate or pew, neither could he fetter the consciences of his children. I state undeniable truths. Your system then, as a compact, can only extend to the individual who subscribes to it.

Thus, suppose a minister charged with heresy, and suppose both him and his church to be members of your confederacy or consociation, suppose such minister deposed for his errors, Dr. Worcester for example ; and suppose his parish, like Mr. Norton's of Weymouth, should agree with him, and should order the decree of the consociation deposing their minister to be burnt by the common hangman, what is your remedy ? None.

Yes. You will say, we can put the church out of communion. So you can now do, without any consociation.

This leads me to notice an alarming innovation in the proposed project. Under the old system, no minister could be brought to trial without a major vote of his own parishioners. This repressed that vile spirit of litigation and slander to which men are so prone.

By the present project we perceive, that a minister may be accused before the consociation by any member of his

church, or by the minister of another church, even when his whole parish are entirely satisfied with his doctrines and conduct. A more dreadful plan for convulsing and tearing in pieces the church of Christ can scarcely be conceived.

If then this plan can have no operation except with regard to the churches who may join it ; if even these churches can bind themselves only, and not the whole parish or society ; if they cannot bind even the minority of the church, who may dissent either at first, or at any subsequent period ; if a clergyman can be settled against the consent of the consociations, under the authority of the old Platform ; if a pastor, deposed by the new consociations, will still retain his sacerdotal character, and can sue for and recover his salary, of what practical efficacy will the new constitution be ? That this is so, we appeal to every sound lawyer in the state. We invite them to examine the constitution, and the decisions of the Supreme Judicial Court, and to say, whether any body, whether synod, council, or the new fangled bodies called consociations, or associations, have power to change the ecclesiastical government of the Congregational Churches ?

If these principles are correct, and we feel a high confidence that they are so, how are the difficulties stated by the committee (which, in fact, have no existence) to be remedied by this plan ?

It is said, in high sounding language without meaning, that "the offender must stand for trial before the *whole* church," by which is intended, I presume, the whole Congregational Church. It is not proposed, I should presume, to summon Mr. Channing or Dr. Porter, before Dr. Baldwin, Dr. Gardiner, or bishop Cheverus.

But where is the authority for the whole Congregational Church to assemble, and settle dogmas of faith and try

hereticks? Did they ever admit such a jurisdiction? No. Their whole conduct and principles are opposed to it.

These, however, are not the whole difficulties of the case; *the greatest remains*——

When the churches, or any number of them, shall have entered into these Consociations, they may be Presbyterians, or Episcopalians, or Consociationalists, but *they will cease to be Congregationalists*. This is no nice metaphysical distinction, it is founded on principles not to be refuted.

What is congregationalism? What is the distinctivè characteristick of congregational churches, as opposed to other sects? It consists **SOLELY**, I repeat it, *solely* in the form of church government, not in doctrine. The *orthodox* congregationalists agree with the church of England in all its articles of faith. It is only in their ideas as to the government of the church that they differ.

The sect of congregationalists had scarcely an existence before our ancestors emigrated to America; and we have shown by ample evidence, which we shall render more clear by our Notes, that their essential characteristick was the denial of any ecclesiastical coercive power. What greater coercive power can there be, than that proposed by the committee, to prevent the election of pastors, and to depose a minister of Christ, against the will of his people?

The consociations are therefore a departure from congregationalism. They will become a new sect. Whatever name they usurp, the effect will be the same.

Every man, then, in any parish now congregational, which shall vote to join, and shall join the *new sect*, will be absolved from his obligations to the pastor and parish. He can lawfully refuse to contribute to the support of the consociating sect on the plea that he is a congregationalist, and cannot conscientiously attend a consociating minister; that

he is opposed in his conscience to ecclesiastical tyranny, and that his money must go to the support of some congregational clergyman.

He may join any congregational society in the state, and his taxes must be paid over to such pastor of the old persuasion.

Who will deny these principles? Will any sensible lawyer, or other sound layman or divine dispute them? He must either deny our premises or conclusion. Will he question our definition of congregationalism? Let him find a better, supported by as great authorities. Will he deny that the Independents or congregationalists held, that each church had full power within itself to govern and regulate its affairs? That it was accountable to no synods, councils, or other ecclesiastical tribunals?

If he admits these premises, he surely cannot deny that the proposed system is a direct and palpable departure from these principles. If so, the new consociators will constitute a new sect, to which the old congregationalists are no longer held to adhere.

I have now closed my proposed inquiry. It would ill suit such a serious, argumentative essay, to attempt to make any appeal to the passions. If such a course had been proper, I am little qualified to adopt it. I have brought to this task only a deep and solemn conviction, I may say, an affecting one, that the proposed measures will end in the disunion of the congregational churches.

I know the zeal with which the system is pursued, and I augur but little effect from my feeble exertions to stop the headlong current. Every effort will be made to prevent this essay from being read, sober and dispassionate as it is. But the day will assuredly arrive, when the principles laid down in the preceding Inquiry will be developed by abler men, and will be very generally admitted.

The rupture and convulsion of many parishes in which the clergy, who favour these violent measures, now feel secure; the general disgust at such an assumption of power, the refusal of many individuals, in parishes where the majority may join the consociations, to submit to their authority, and the general admiration of the conduct of those ministers, who shall have adhered to the ancient and venerable system of religious freedom transmitted to us by our ancestors, will finally and inevitably produce an assent to the principles we have advanced, and as general a censure and condemnation of the few restless men, by whom these changes have been introduced.

A LAYMAN.

NOTES.

NOTE 1st.

AS some persons may be disposed to doubt the authority of Chief Justice Parsons in the historical part of his opinions, because they do not favour the views of the friends of the new system of ecclesiastical dominion, we have thought it best to cite some passages from the Rev. Wm. Hubbard's history of New England, a work of the first authority, and conclusive on this subject; since he was cotemporary with Cotton Mather, the author of the *famous* Manuscript, was as orthodox as any man then or now living, and must have felt disposed to give all due weight to the ecclesiastical power. It will be seen that Chief Justice Parsons drew his knowledge on this subject, in a great measure, from this pure orthodox source.

It appears, that Messrs. Shelton and Higginson of Salem, were elected by the people and ordained by them, without the aid of any other Churches or Pastors. Plymouth had been invited to send messengers, but they arrived after the ordination. Hubbard, 119. printed copy.

"Whatever sinister apprehensions are or ever were taken up about the religion of the Colony of New England, they aimed only at the primitive pattern described in the word of God, and practice of the apostolical churches." Hubbard 181.

We have shewn from Mosheim that there was no ecclesiastical authority in the apostolical churches, out of the limits of each separate church.

One of the principles of church government in Massachusetts, according to Hubbard, was the following :

4th. "That there is no jurisdiction to which such particular churches are or ought to be subject (be it placed in classis, or synod) by way of *authoritative censure*, or any church power, *extrinsical* to the *said churches*, which they ought to have dependence upon any other sort of men for the exercise of." Hubbard 184.

In 1637 the first synod was called in New-England, not by ecclesiastical but by the civil authority. It will not do to examine its proceedings too minutely. It is certain, they have no tendency to increase our veneration for councils and synods. The only wise thing they appear to have said or done was "disclaiming any judicial power." "For according to the principles of Congregational churches, the *question* only is to be carried to the synod, but the *case* remains with the *particular church* to which the person is related."

“Disputes ran so high in that synod, that the magistrates were compelled to interfere to prevent disturbance. Some of the Boston members were disgusted and withdrew.” Hubbard 301-2.

“In 1642. Mr. Carter was ordained pastor of Woburn. There was some difference about the manner of his ordination, for, in regard they had no other officer in the church besides, nor any members that thought themselves fit to solemnize such an ordinance, they were advised by some, to desire the elders of other churches to perform it, by imposing hands on Mr. Carter; but others, supposing it might be the means or occasion of introducing the dependency of churches, &c. and so of a presbytery, were not so free to admit thereof, and therefore it was performed by one of their own members, though not so well to the satisfaction of some of the magistrates and ministers then present; and since that time it hath been *more frequent* to desire the elders of neighbouring churches, to ordain such, as are by the *churches* and *people* chosen to be their officers. Hubbard 408.

Here we see the extreme jealousy of our ancestors, and that the present usages as to ordination are only matters of courtesy; being *frequently* submitted to in order to please some weaker magistrates, who could not relish scriptural simplicity.

The next great council was the synod in 1648. On which we remark:

1. That a law was necessary to call it, no ecclesiastical power being competent so to do.

2. That even that synod was looked upon with a jealous eye. Some of the deputies or members of the General Court questioned the power of the Court. “As also, because the main end was, for an agreement of one uniform practice in all the churches, to be commended to the General Court which *seemed* to give power either to the synod or the Court to *compel* the churches to *practice* what shall be so established; but being assured that the synod would have no authoritative power, but the court would have liberty to adopt or not just as they pleased, the objections were withdrawn.” Hubbard 533.

“Still, many of the churches could not swallow it, because they feared it was the intention to have ecclesiastical laws to bind the church. Hubbard 534.

3d. It must be noticed, that the proceedings of the synod were considered of no account, till adopted by the Legislature.

It was this synod which framed the Cambridge Platform. It was duly passed into a law by the legislative adoption; and, according to Hubbard, by that rule the Churches of New-England have ever since been ordered. This was written about forty years after. One of the main principles of the Platform is as follows:—

"13. Particular churches, though they are distinct, and so have not power one over another, yet because they are united to Christ, not only as a mystical but a political head, they ought to have communion one with another by way of mutual care, consultation, admonition, and participation in the same ordinances." *Hubbard* 540.

Not a syllable of deposition, or trial of offences committed by one church, by any number of churches convened; They never carried it farther than requiring the advice of mutual councils.

"In these propositions," says Hubbard, "are summed up in brief the principles of the Congregational Churches of New-England, as to *Church government*; which is the *only point* wherein they differ from the rest of the reformed churches, whether English, Belgick or Gallick."

See our argument on *this point* in the conclusion of our essay.

In 1680, a synod again declared, that there was nothing respecting *doctrine*, but what concerns *worship and discipline*, that caused their ancestors to remove to the deserts of America, that there they might have liberty to practise accordingly: "and as to what concerns Church Government, they refer to the platform of discipline agreed upon by the messengers of their churches in 1648, solemnly owned and confirmed in the last synod."

Hubbard, p. 623.

This was thirty two years after the adoption of that Platform. They had seen its effects, were satisfied with it, and ratified it solemnly again. The allegations of Dr. Morse, that they were soon discontented with it are unfounded. There always have been some men, who wanted a stricter mode of discipline, but the Churches, in all periods, have been, and we believe still are, opposed to any change of the ancient Platform.

NOTE 2d.

The Reverend Dr. Worcester, of Salem, in his third letter to Mr. Channing, asserts, that Dr. Cotton Mather's proposals were rejected by the Committee, "that not a scrip of them was retained, and that rather than to have submitted to them, some of the Committee, if not the whole, would have *resisted* unto blood." It is a little singular, that proposals of so bad a character should have been received with so much respect; that they should have been introduced into the Panoplist as an "invaluable relick," and treated by the association with so much attention. The only object of using Dr. Cotton Mather's manuscript must have been, to increase the evidence in favour of Consociations by the weight of *authority*. Now the *authority* of a man capable of proposing measures, which would call for "*resistance* unto

blood," appears to us to be of little weight. The same remark would apply to all the *nine ministers* who proposed the plan, and to the whole convention who adopted it. It is immaterial to what part of the old plan the objection *now* lies. If any feature was so odious as to require resistance, it must have been because it was repugnant to our rights. Any men capable of proposing *any thing* so repugnant, are not entitled to our confidence in such matters. But Dr. Worcester's is not a fair representation of the case. Our venerable fathers are very much calumniated. Their plan may be found in the Panoplist of July, 1815. We assert, without fear of refutation, that the old plan is less odious, more liberal, and less calculated to destroy our liberties, than the new one. There was no power given to the consociations in the former, to determine *who* should be *settled and deposed*, an authority expressly given in the present plan. So far from being *wholly rejected*, it is all retained and enlarged, except a single feature as to the associations, which was its best trait.

The same remark may be made on the quotations from Cotton, and Hooker, and all the early fathers of New-England. There is not one of them who does not distinctly, in clear and forcible terms, condemn the principles now set up in the present plan, as anti-christian. When they speak of consociations, they did not contemplate *standing judiciary* councils. They explicitly repel the idea. We beg our readers to consult the passages as we have done, and judge between us.

But the conclusive answer to all these cases, and one which might have superseded all others, is ; To what does an authority of this sort amount, which appears to have had no influence on the age in which it was produced, nor in the many generations which have followed ? From 1646 to 1706, there were some very active men who tried to enlarge the ecclesiastical power. At one time they pressed a synod, as in 1662, into their service—at another, the Convention. But they never had influence enough to procure the adoption of their plan by a single church. The efforts of Mr. Wise, of Ipswich, defeated them with the people. They never dared to publish the doings of the convention, and we are indebted to Mr. Wise for a knowledge of them. A whole century has since elapsed, and they are now brought out of their retirement, like the relicks of some saint, which the Catholics often fancy emit a grateful odour. Yet, even now, Dr. Worcester tells us that he would, like Mr. Wise, "resist it unto blood." So much for the *main* authority of Dr. Morse.

NOTE 3d.

While Massachusetts, in 1706, indignantly and wisely spurned the ecclesiastical fetters which had been forged for her, Connecticut proved more submissive. Cotton Mather's plan was adopted at Saybrook. But that plan, as I have stated, did not, like Morse's, authorize consociations to interfere in the ordination of ministers. Not a sentence referred to it. Those ceremonies were accordingly conducted, as before, on the old Congregational plan, by calling in the neighbouring churches. Matters went on quietly in this way for fifty years. Now mark the inevitable progress of usurpation! In the year 1758 the town of Wallingford, in New-Haven county, elected the Rev. JAMES DANA their minister. The neighbouring churches were called in to ordain him as usual. But a few very turbulent men in the parish appealed to the *Consociation*, and charged Dr. Dana with the heresy of Arminianism. It was a new case. There was no precedent, and no law for the consociation. But when did men ever refuse to *exercise power when invited*? They cited the parish and Pastor as culprits. They forbade ordination. The town despised them as usurpers, and proceeded. The consociation then deposed Dr. Dana from the ministry, and excommunicated the church. This would have been pretty well for Hildebrand himself. But they distanced the Pontiff. They declared the venerable ordaining council, who adhered to publick liberty and law, *disorderly persons*. All these proceedings were in opposition to the Platform which gave them existence. The town however knew its rights. Dr. Dana continued to act, and the Consociation was ridiculed and despised. But mark the result. What was impudent assumption in 1758, has now become *law* by usurpation. The Consociation has reduced all the people and all the churches of Connecticut to the worst of all servitudes; for a church can neither *ordain* nor *retain* a beloved Pastor against the will of these usurping consociations. The limits of these notes, too extended already, will not permit me to enlarge on this case.

The curious may see it ably displayed in sundry pamphlets by *Jonathan Todd*, and *William Hart*, 1759, and *R. Wolcott*, 1760, which may be found in the Boston Athenæum, and probably at Cambridge.

I must, however, cite one or two passages from one of them, which having been written nearer the age of the attempted usurpation in 1706, is entitled to more credit than even Dr. Morse. "You," says this writer, (addressing one of the usurping Priests of that day,) "You say, that the churches are sick of their Platform, and that several memorials have been presented to the

“ General Court of Massachusetts, praying for a synod to promote that so much desired plan of Consociations. If you had informed us, that the *churches* in that Province had presented these memorials, it would have been to *your purpose* ; but you are too wise to tell us *who* presented them. However, Mr. *Wise* has told us. It was a set of ambitious clergymen, that *had conspired to betray* the liberties of the churches, for which *he calls them traitors.*” See Wolcott, page 9, printed in Boston, 1760.

So it would seem, that ambition and a desire to betray the liberties of the churches are not of recent growth only. The same writer says. “ The Congregational platform allows the *churches* to choose a council known to them to be wise and just. *This*, your scheme, denies and subjects them wholly to the Consociation. It is certainly a greater privilege to ask council of men wise and friendly, than to be bound to men in an endless succession in some *post*, whom we know not, and cannot depend upon. Cranmer and Ridley, two good bishops, were succeeded by Gardiner and Bonner, two monsters ; and what *has* been, *may* be. There is no dispute, other bodies have a right to ask counsel of men best able to direct them ; and why should not *churches* have the same ? ”

Thus we see, if there were usurpers in 1758, there were also champions for religious freedom. God grant the latter race may never be extinct !

NOTE 4th.

The *Ratio Disciplina Fratrum Nov-Anglorum* is a rare book. Whether the committee and the reviewer hoped to induce the publick to believe that Dr. Cotton Mather, its author, was in favour of their system, I cannot say. Such was the impression made on my mind from their partial quotations, as mutilated as some of the passages of scripture have been in some theological writings. We affirm that Dr. Mather was, on the whole, well satisfied with the state of the church in 1719, when he wrote this book. He speaks of *other* people desiring a change, but *he* thought none necessary. The Committee of the Grand Association, for example, quote this sentence. “ When councils are called by litigant parties in churches, it had been *hitherto* in the liberty of each party to choose and call their *own councils* where they pleased, which left room for much partiality to operate, and one council to succeed and oppose another with an endless confusion more proper for Babel than a city of God.” So far the quotation, and one would infer from it, that these were his own opinions : far from it—he merely states the pleas of the disaffected and ambitious. He adds, “ Through the blessing of God

their Saviour, the churches had not, IN FACT, seen much of this confusion, and it *may be*, the prudent servants of God had it more in FEAR than there was any need of." This certainly takes away the authority of Mather to the point of the *evils experienced* in his day, which was more than seventy years after the platform was adopted. In his judgment, it was *idle fear*, rather than *solid reason*, which led to the proposed consociations of which he was then treating. He adds in another page, that the consociation scheme succeeded in *one* state (Connecticut) but failed in the *other New-England States*, because "some considerable persons among the *ministers and brethren* thought the liberties of particular churches were in danger of being limited and infringed by them." So far he is quoted by the committee and the Panoplist reviewer, but they omit the conclusion of the same sentence. "Accordingly, the churches go on in the *old method*, of which an account has been given, and *human prudence* being obliged to stop where it is, the spirit of our Saviour so descends with his operations, that *councils rarely miss* of their desired effect."

This was fourteen years after the scheme of tyranny of 1706 had failed. Dr. Mather, in his preface, states five points in which all the New-England churches agreed. 1st. That the people had a right, when they pleased, to form a church. 2d. That each church has full, entire, and independent powers to elect officers, &c. 3d. That Pastors, so elected, have full authority to administer sacraments, &c. 4th. That in matters of *common concern* only, which affect the *tranquillity of other churches*, they ought to ask and pay great regard to advice. 5th. That the scriptures are a sufficient rule of faith, worship, and manners. He adds, "The Eleutherians (or friends of freedom) will consider how far any *further agreement*, (than in those points,) may be necessary, and whether these unreasonable sons of Procrustes, the narrow souled and imperious bigots for uniformity, will do religion any *real service* by the pressing of it." In all this we agree with Dr. Mather.

It is pretended both by the Committee and Reviewer, that defects in the Platform were early perceived and lamented, and you would infer, if you did not know these reverend combatants, that the church was at that early day in a *dreadful state*.

Dr. Mather himself is my authority against them. His work was before them, and in face of it they make these assertions.

In his *Ratio Disciplina*, after the platform had had a trial of seventy-five years, he says, "If the church refuse to give to any council an account of a matter, (upon trial,) a thing that *perhaps never happened*," &c. Again; "The church persisting in irregularity, they run the hazard of a proceeding, which was *never above once* come into, withdrawing communion." "He

" thanks Christ, that the end is obtained without such extremities."

Where do the committee procure their facts? Surely Hubbard and the author of the *Magnalia*, and of the *Ratio Disciplinae*, must have known the disorders in the church, had they existed.

In page 170, Dr. Mather asserts, " that the councils of New-England *rarely meet* with contradictions from the churches " whose cases are submitted." " The New-England councils have been so regularly composed, that there has been LITTLE occasion for the old complaint, *omne concilium parit bellum*." That is to say, they had done better than the *old authoritative* councils.

" The synods of New-England know no weapons," says Dr. Mather, " but those which are spiritual. They pretend to no *juridical* authority, nor any *significancy* but what is merely *instructive and suasive*."

He adds, the churches of New-England cannot better express themselves than in the language of Festus Hommius. " The decrees of councils ought not to be propounded unto, or obtruded on the churches as Prætorian sayings, but they should be sent to the churches, that they may be examined by them according to the word of God, and that *if they be found to agree with it, they may be approved*." This submits the *whole* power to the churches. Let any one read the report prefixed to this essay, or the history of the church at Wallingford, and then say, whether the one or the other coincide with Hommius' ideas of the power of councils, which, Mather says, *expressed the sense of our New-England fathers*.

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